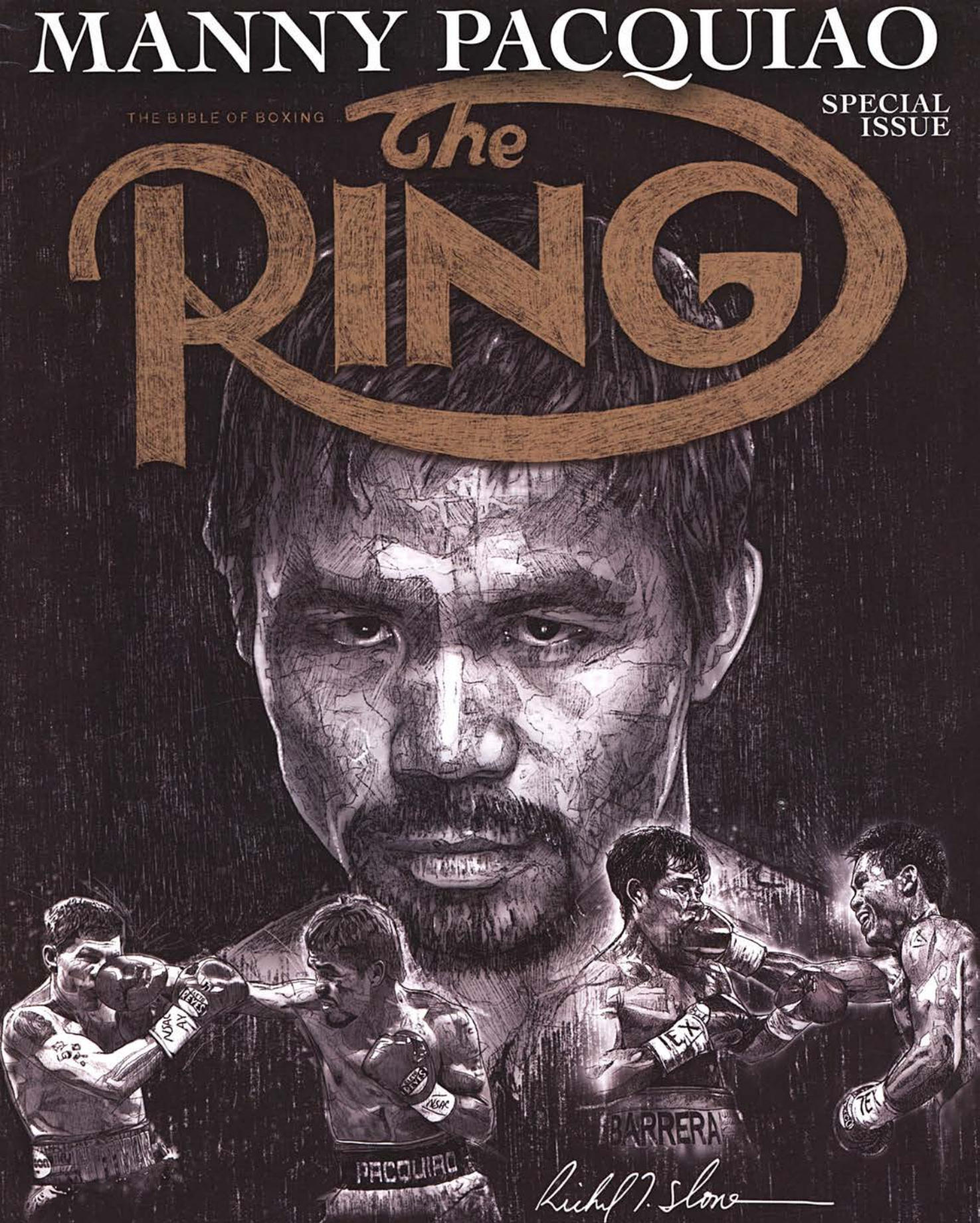
MANNY PACQUIAO

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE BIBLE OF BOXING

The RING



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LARRY MERCHANT

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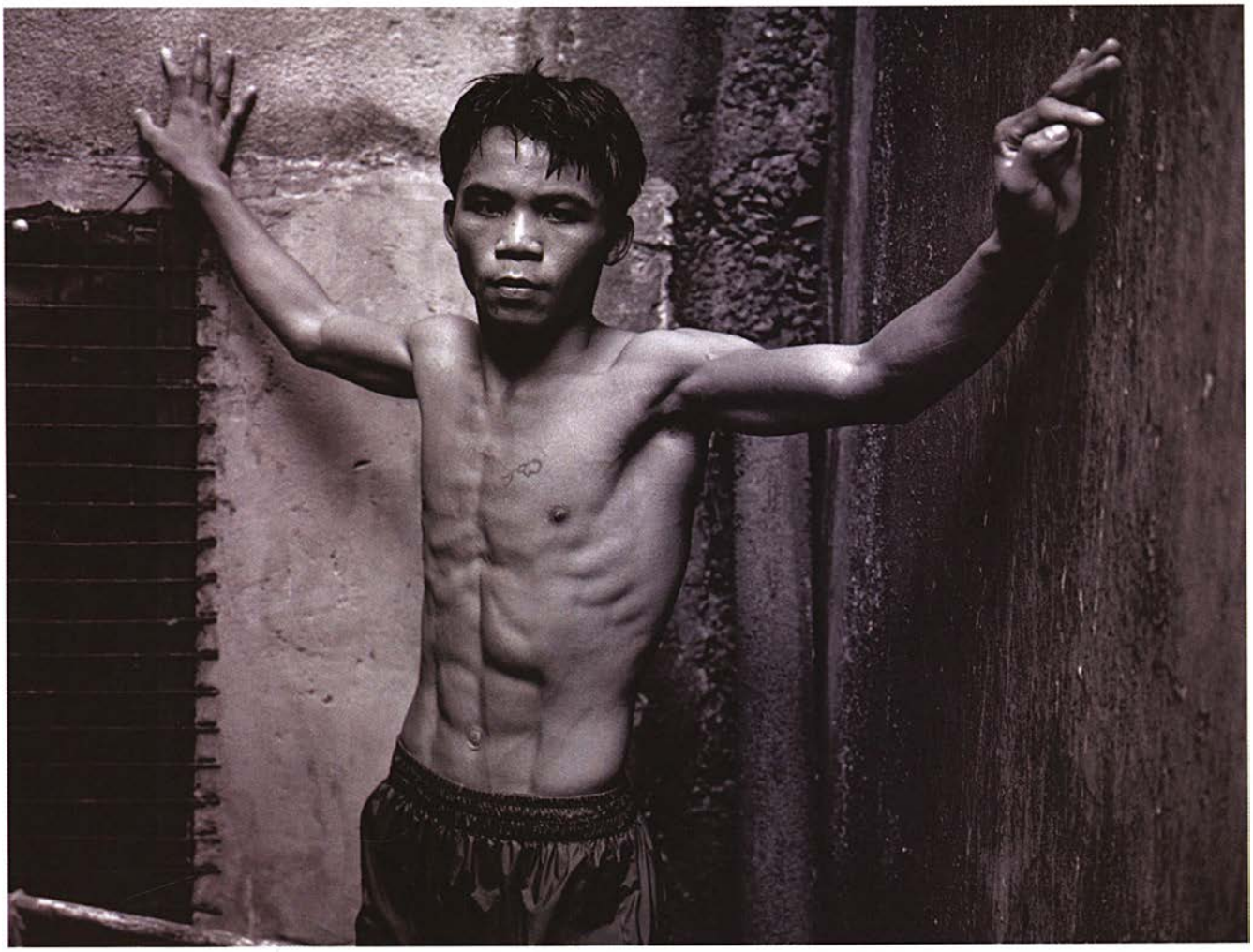

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COVER PAINTING BY RICHARD SLONE

Filipino fans gathered in droves to watch Pacquiao's third clash with Mexican rival Erik Morales on November 18, 2006. They were rewarded with a third-round knockout.

JOEL NITO

Here's what some of our readers sent when asked on Twitter to share their stories of Manny Pacquiao:

THE MAN

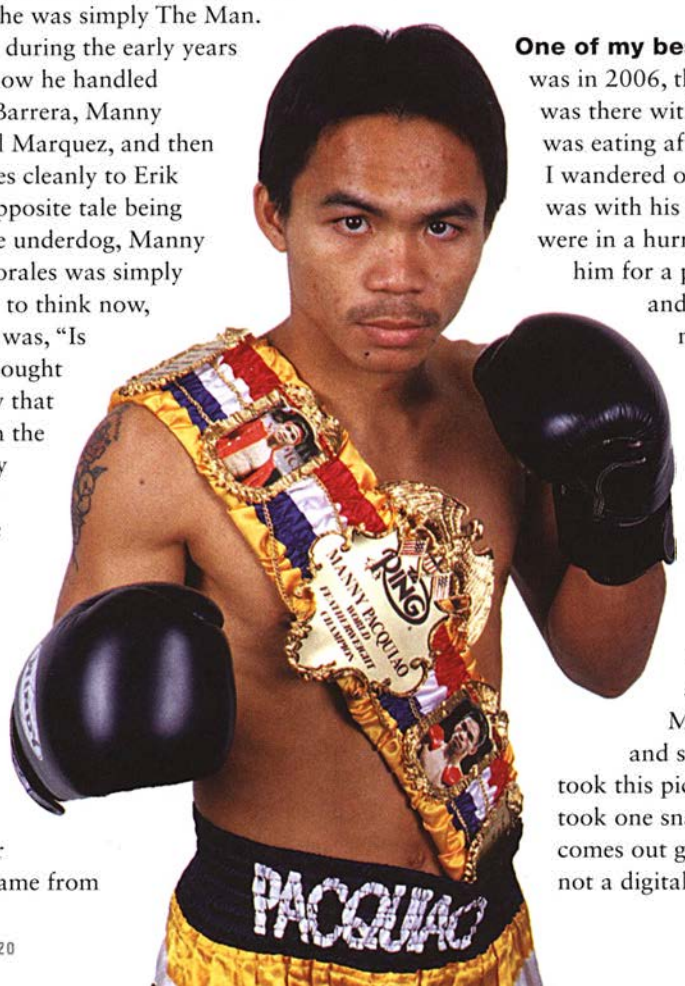
As a Filipino-American and a fan of boxing, the only Filipino boxers I knew that were champions were those from the distant past, like Francisco Guilledo (Pancho Villa) and Gabriel Elorde. There have been other champions in the lower weight classes, but none that hit the American mainstream. Thus, my first experience watching Manny Pacquiao was the same as most people, when he stepped into the ring with two weeks' notice to fight Lehlohonolo Ledwaba in what was supposed to be an easy night for the South African fighter. Six bloody rounds later, a star was born and a legend was in the making.

After that fight, every Manny Pacquiao fight became appointment viewing for my family. When I say family, I mean the WHOLE family: parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts, San Miguel and lumpia (beer and spring rolls). Manny showed up in the Tyson-Lewis undercard to destroy Jorge Julio in two rounds. Then the true test came: the first fight against Marco Antonio Barrera. Again, Manny arrived as an underdog, and he left as The Ring featherweight champion after his blinding speed battered Barrera. The world knew him as "Pac Man," but to my family he was simply The Man.

What sticks out to me during the early years of Manny's ascent was how he handled adversity. After beating Barrera, Manny draws with Juan Manuel Marquez, and then after a tune-up fight, loses cleanly to Erik Morales. This was the opposite tale being told: Instead of being the underdog, Manny was the favorite, and Morales was simply a better boxer. It's funny to think now, but in 2005 the thought was, "Is Manny as good as we thought he was?" Pacquiao knew that in order to compete with the elite, he couldn't just rely on his speed and his left hand. He had to become a more complete fighter. Manny developed his right hand, avenged his loss against Erik Morales, and the rest is history.

Even at the age of 40, a Manny Pacquiao fight is appointment viewing for my family. A man that came from extreme poverty in the streets of Kibawe to the couch of *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, Manny Pacquiao has and continues to inspire. A Hall of Fame boxer, politician, musician, actor, even professional basketball player (I know he owned the team, but still), Manny Pacquiao is the embodiment of what one human being is truly capable of if they put in the effort. Thank you for all the memories, Manny.

Jordan Spees



I was on a Royal Caribbean *Navigator of the Seas* cruise in the 2003-2005 time frame. I noticed the name tags of the bartenders at one of the ship's nicest bars said they were from the Philippines. I mentioned being a boxing fan and Pacquiao's name. They were so elated that I knew who Manny was that I got free drinks the rest of the trip. Never met Pac Man, unfortunately, but have been a fan a very long time. It was clear then just how important he was to the Filipino people and how special he would become to the country.

Chris Mendez
Marine Corps veteran turned lawyer in NYC

I remember attending the Pacquiao vs. Thurman fight in Vegas and it being almost religious, the love Manny got from fans. You have to be there live to really see his magnitude.

Dwight Kincy

One of my best memories with Pacquiao was in 2006, the third fight vs. Erik Morales. I was there with Team Morales. While everyone was eating after the pre-fight press conference, I wandered off and ran into Pacquiao, who was with his team and Freddie Roach. They were in a hurry and everyone was following him for a picture. I saw him smile at me and asked for a picture. I was a bit nervous. He smiled and pointed at my team press pass on my neck since it said Team Morales. I said, "Yes, I'm here with them" and laughed. And then he said "and you want a picture with me" and did the camera-click gesture. I shook my head up and down, smiling, and took off my pass. Freddie Roach was not happy; they were in a hurry and he seemed annoyed. So Pac Man gives my camera to Freddie and says, "Here." So Freddie Roach took this picture of me and Pacquiao! He took one snap. I remember saying I hope it comes out good and I'm in focus, since it was not a digital camera. Someone on his team

asked, "Who's going to win?" I smiled and said the best fighter will be the winner.

I went back and told Olivaritos (Morales' father) and Erik my story. They said it is a very good picture to have and that opportunity doesn't always come, so good thing I asked.

Esmeralda Ferraro

I've been a huge boxing fan all my life and was in Vegas for the 2008 World Series of Poker. I couldn't get fight tickets for Pacquiao vs. David Diaz, as I was playing an event that day. As it happens, I'm not very good at poker and busted out of the comp about two hours before the fight.

Knowing I can now make the fight, I dash from the Rio to Mandalay Bay with $113 in my pocket. I'd checked online and there were $50/$60 tickets for the fight, so I will just get one of those and I'm all set.

I get to the ticket office and the cheapest tickets they have left are $200 (f--k!).

I'll never get back to the hotel in time to go and get more money, so there is only one thing to do. I run back onto the casino floor and dump $100 on one hand of blackjack to double me up so I could get a ticket.

BOOM! I won it. Straight back to the arena with $13 left over for cheesy nachos.

I walked into the arena and there were loads of free seats much better than mine (Pacquiao wasn't quite as well-known or the draw he later became), so I wandered down into one of those and watched a belter of a fight. I remember thinking Pacquiao was as relentless as anything I'd seen but also how hard and tough Diaz was. I returned to watch Pacquiao fight Cotto and Hatton and went over for the Mayweather fight but couldn't get tickets.

P.S. – I chose cheesy nachos over a taxi back to the hotel and regretted it after the fight, as I was staying at the other end of The Strip.

Chris McNicholls
Manchester, England

THE BAD WITH THE GOOD

Though I am a huge Arturo Gatti fan, I was surprised that The Ring chose (in the August 2020 Gatti-Ward special issue) not to make mention of the Gatti-Gamache controversy where pretty much every reputable news outlet, including your own Thomas Hauser, concurred that Gatti and his team conspired with the NYSAC to hide the fact that Gatti did not make weight for the fight. The fact that you included a photo of the knockout without ever mentioning the controversy made it even more galling. Joey Gamache almost lost his life and suffered permanent damage from that fight. As any boxing fan should completely understand, sometimes our heroes are flawed.

Randy Cook
Cherry Hill, In.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S RESPONSE: You make a very good point, Randy. Given the prolonged public outcry over the gross weight disparity (15 pounds in favor of Gatti) on fight night and the brutal result of the HBO-televised bout, which caused Gamache's immediate retirement from the sport, we should have at least used the word "controversial" somewhere in the caption of that From The Archives photo. I didn't pen the caption, but I covered that fight 20 years ago (for HouseOfBoxing.com) and was present at the weigh-in, which was a hot mess. In our defense, a caption for a photo isn't like a feature story where you can include all kinds of details, but I'd be lying if I said there isn't any desire to allow Gatti's legacy to shine without negative spots given his contribution to the sport and his untimely death. However, I've never viewed that controversial event as a strike against Gatti as though he "cheated." Or perhaps a better way to state that is that I don't totally blame him for what happened. I've always viewed it as the New York State Athletic Commission's failure to fairly and properly officiate a weigh-in, and I also consider it an abuse of the flawed previous-day weigh-in rule, which allows fighters 24-30 hours to rehydrate. (At the time, the NYSAC did not regulate how much weight a boxer puts on after the weigh-in.) You claim that Gatti and his team "conspired" with the NYSAC to hide his true weight, but there's no proof of this, and even if Gatti's representatives did notify the commission that he may or may not make the contracted weight of 141 pounds, it was still the responsibility of the commission to follow their rules. Having been there, I can tell you that the commission allowed other fighters on that card to jump on and off the scale before a clear reading could be taken, including the headliner, Oscar De La Hoya. The complaints of De La Hoya's opponent, Derrell Coley, fell on deaf ears, just like the protests of Gamache's team and the representatives of other fighters on the undercard who felt the weigh-in was being mishandled. I'm not excusing Gatti for missing weight, but I'm not blaming him for the incompetence and alleged corruption of the NYSAC, which was widely criticized by NYC sportswriters during this period, and rightly so. Indeed, Gamache sued the NYSAC and the State of New York following the bout, not Team Gatti or any representatives of his promoter, Main Events.

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RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

PRELIMS

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RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

PRELIMS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
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comeoutwriting@gmail.com
or P.O. Box 90254
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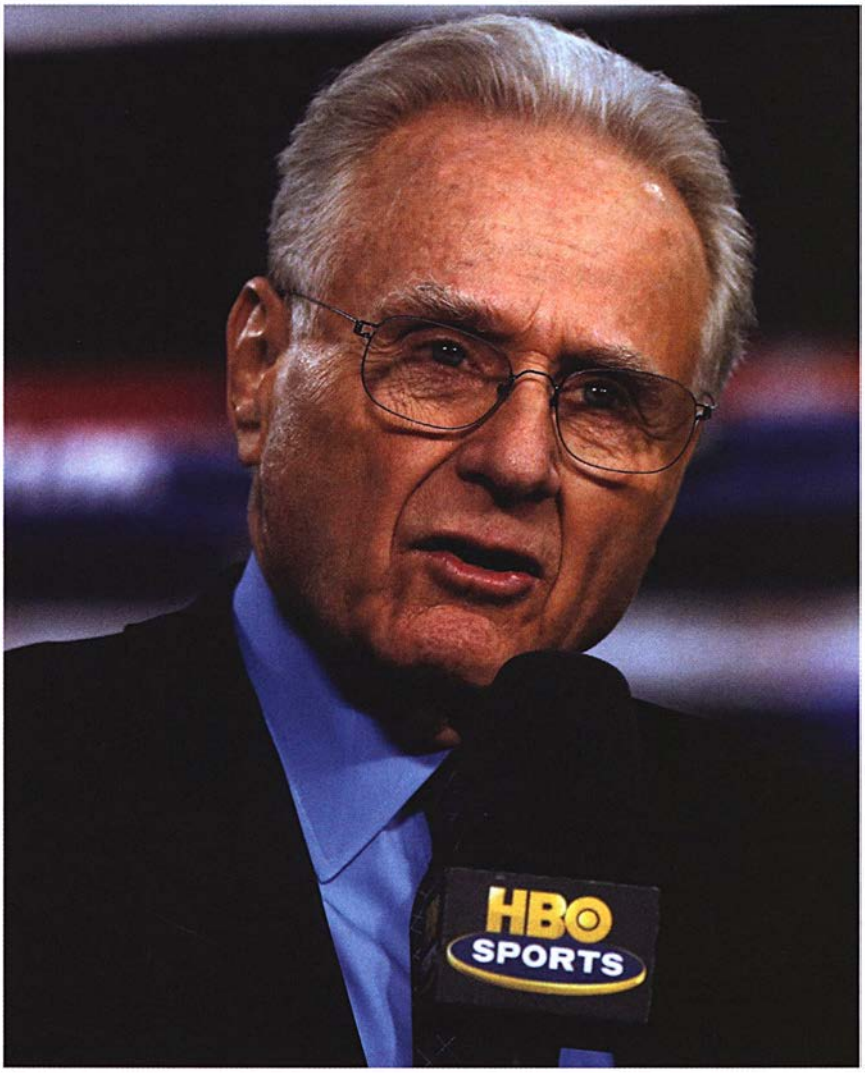
MANNY AND ME



Merchant suggested a few De La Hoya matchups during his HBO tenure, but "Oscar vs. Manny" was the most sensational.

"Manny and Me."

What a concept!

Like most knuckleheads, I'm homebound these days, shadowboxing COVID-19, with nothing to do and no time to do it. Then The Ring rang, asking If I'd like to …

They had softened me up in the Mike Tyson issue with just about the nicest words ever said about me. Now they were preparing a Manny Pacquiao issue. Let me think about it …

Once upon a time I wrote stuff. Thousands of columns, a few books. Then in my next life, television, 40 years with HBO, I mostly spoke captions to pictures. Can I go home to the written word again? From babbling back to scribbling?

Let's give it a shot. Come out telling a story on paper ...

So, how did I imagine the unimaginable: Manny vs. Oscar? Was it a nightmare? Or did I intuit that Freddie Roach, Manny's trainer, would wake up in the middle of the night, as he remembers today, with a clear vision of Manny's speed and punch smacking the bigger but older Oscar De La Hoya around? And how would all this affect me?

None of the above.

To many of my colleagues in the media, and the oddsmakers, it would be taken as a cynical mismatch, one of those popular events that turns out to be a competitive joke. (Oscar was still the biggest draw in the sport and Manny had galvanized a Filipino fan base that no one knew existed.) We, the custodians of the sport, might complain, while the money guys twirl their mustaches and count the returns in a back room. Another successful hustle.

Pause, as my grandson Charlie, age 9, would put it. Deeper background.

A decade earlier, I was approached by promoter Bob Arum at a birthday party for Sugar Ray Leonard. Who, he asked, should Oscar fight next? "Whitaker," I blurted. "Yes!" he said. I shrugged and assumed that I was one of many ringsiders he had canvassed. By the time the birthday cake arrived, I had forgotten all about it. Until now. Oscar would go on to beat Whitaker, a flashy, defensive wizard, in a good boxing match.

About five years later, at a media dinner in Las Vegas, Arum again asked his favorite question. I jumped up and blurted again what seemed obvious – Shane Mosley. Oscar and he had grown up in Los Angeles gyms and had sparred as kids. Both were champions now. The fight would transcend the local angle. It was one of those rare feverish dramas that nobody loses. But Mosley was the winner and he would win the rematch by an even closer margin.

Cut to October 2007, another five years. I'm at my desk at home, scanning the Ring Ratings, which I mark up as a reference for what's going on and, in my humble opinion, what should be going on. It's a dirty job but someone has to do it.

The ratings are folded up under photos of the famous painting by

Merchant interviews Pacquiao following his decision win over Marco Antonio Barrera in their 2007 rematch.

ERIC JAMISON

George Bellows of Dempsey-Firpo and, nearby, Charlie Chaplin getting ready for his hilarious film short on boxing. I keep that around to remind me that for fans, it's still Fun & Games. But the main event on my desk is a laminated card of the incomparable Henry Armstrong, given to me by Billy Keane, who had worked in various financial capacities with Manny. He swears that he wasn't trying to brainwash me, recalling that I had said in public that Manny could be a modern version of Armstrong, dominating in many divisions. Manny-Oscar had never occurred to him. The card was an innocent mole.

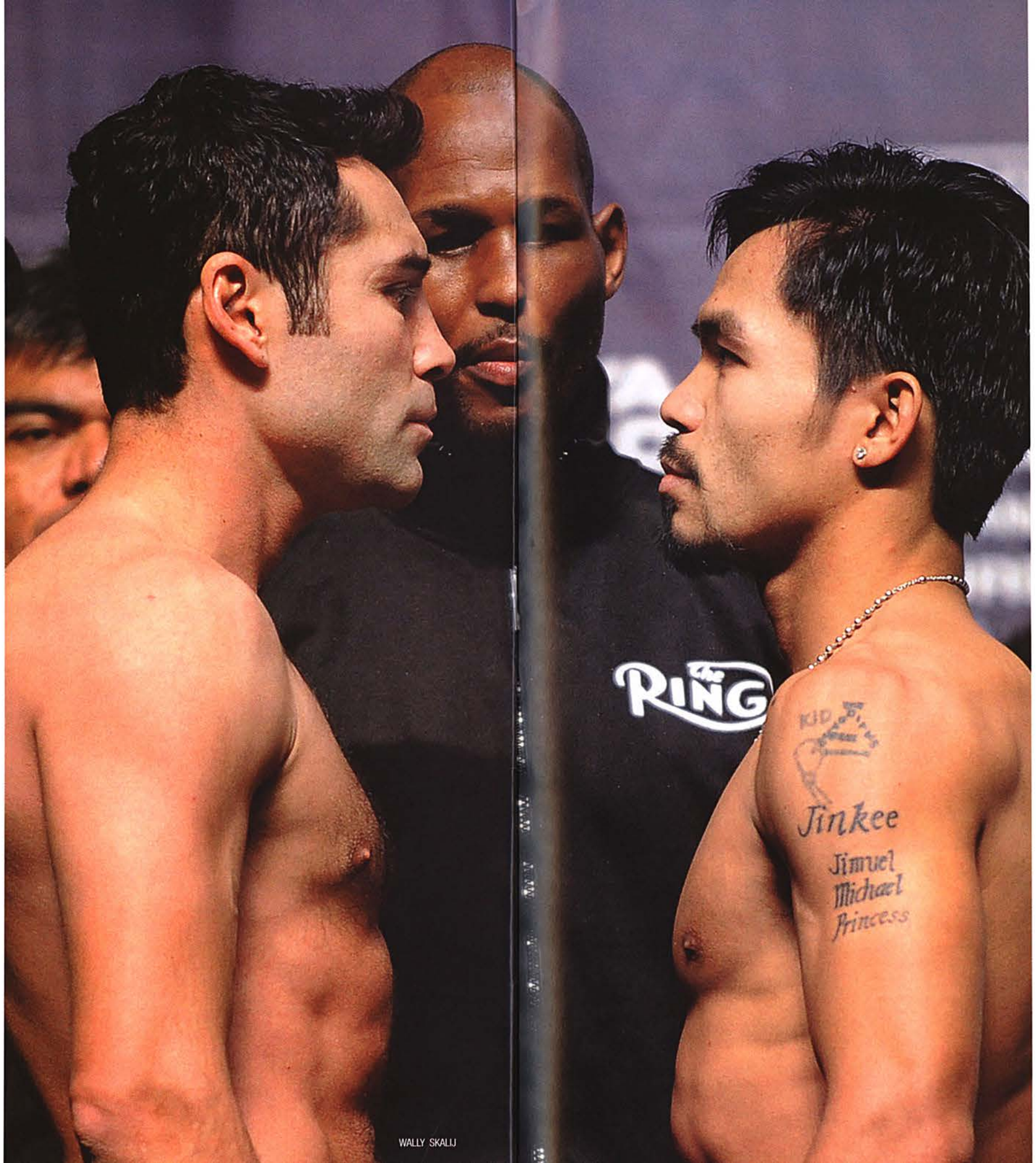
That's how Manny-Oscar came to me one day. It was guaranteed to be a major event, which the game needs from time to time, and who knew? A real fight might break out. Immediately I called my pal Dan Rafael, who covered boxing so comprehensively for ESPN that I thought of him as Boxing Central. I reported my brainstorm to him. Had I lost my mind? Here are some excerpts of what he wrote …

"Merchant's fantasy – better sit down for this one – Manny Pacquiao, the world's most exciting fighter," to challenge Oscar De La Hoya. Manny was fighting at 130 pounds, Oscar was up at 154 and four inches taller. "I told my main man he was crazy."

But then Dan would be open-minded enough to listen to my logic, such as it was. "My sage mentor began to make his case, and when you listen it's not such a nutty idea." I reminded him of the many elite prizefighters through the ages who had made the leap, in mind and body, to fight above their fighting weight. "Hard to argue," Dan concluded.

After our discussion, Dan checked with Bob Arum, who was then promoting Manny. "Let's make it," Arum said. He knew Manny would jump at it.

That was the genesis of the possible dream. The fight took place a year later, after Manny had won a belt at 135, closer to his walking-around weight in the 140s. Oscar took off so much weight that it probably weakened him. If I were a betting man, I probably would have bet on Oscar anyway and lost my money. Manny, whose straight power left is the best I have ever seen, hit him with about a thousand of them, I said, upstaging the official statistics. Oscar couldn't find or keep up with



WALLY SKALIJ

De La Hoya-Pacquiao was criticized by much of the media, but it captured the public's imagination.

Manny aside from a couple rounds when he landed some body shots, much as the bigger Bernard Hopkins had in stopping the Golden Boy four years earlier. After eight rounds, Oscar's face was no longer the face that brought squealing young women to his fights. He retired. And shortly afterward he retired altogether from the sport he had uplifted. Manny succeeded him as an international supernova.

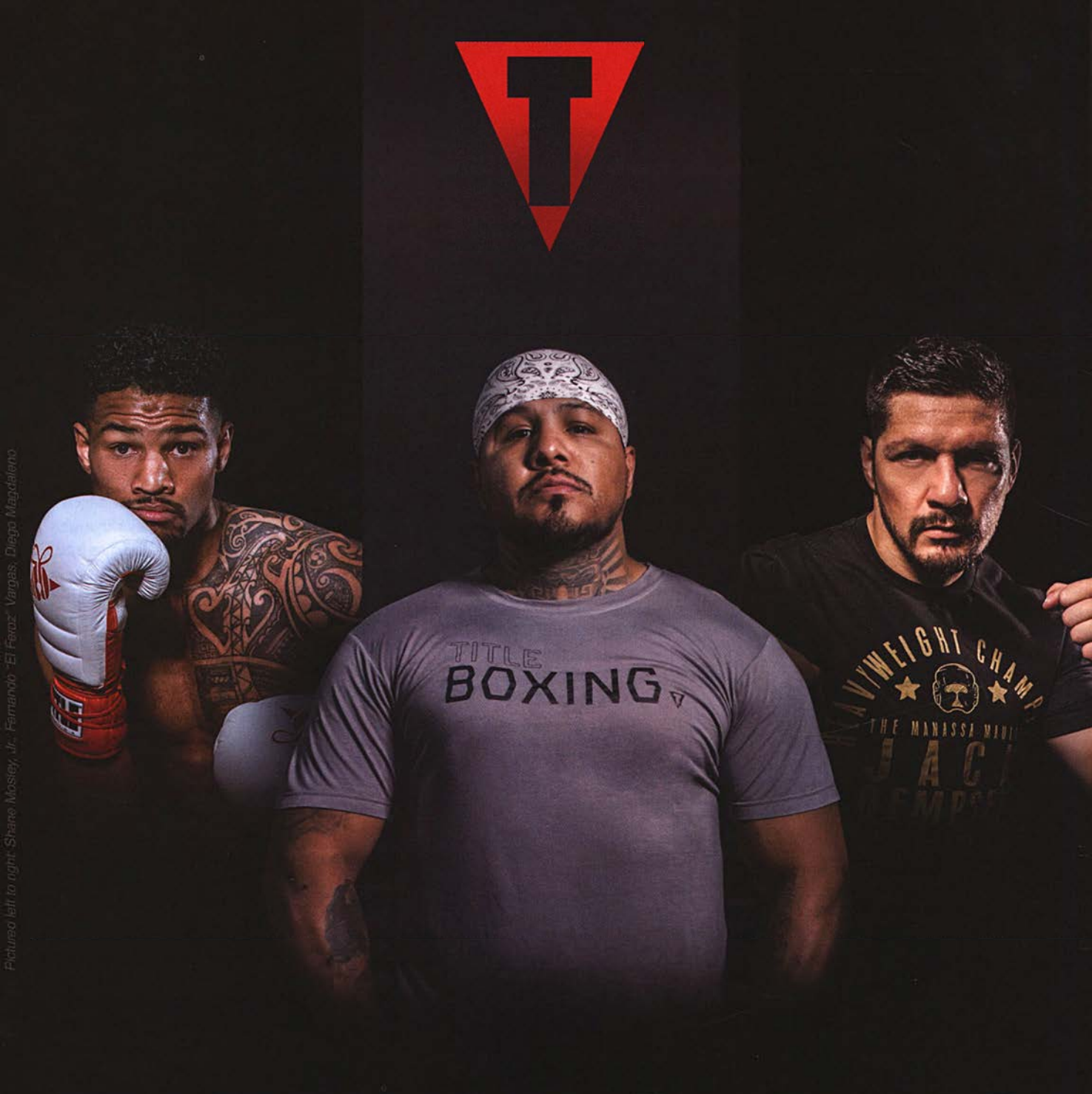
After the fight, after Arum acknowledged my role on camera, I made my way through the madding crowd to dinner with friends. My wife, Patricia, says I'm just me at home but at a big fight I'm Mick Jagger. I'm pretty sure that anyone whose face is on TV for as long as mine was experiences those intense moments, those demands for photos, those smiles, and it peaked that night. My friends seemed hyper, relishing all the thank yous from Filipino fans and interviews with Filipino scribes.

I covered all of Manny's fights over the next decade and I felt a little disappointed that he never thanked me personally.

Athletes have the talent, take the risks, do the work, and we're just there. We are recognized by whether we say or write good things or bad things. If we are recognized at all. That's the deal and I'm OK with it. But in this case, well, Patricia and I went on several cruises in Europe, and the ships were manned mainly by Filipinos and the service people recognized me and spooned out extra portions of ice cream. We chatted. I felt their pride in him. That was enough.

After HBO and I split, Bob Arum hired me to do the commentary on the international feeds of his fights. One of them involved Manny in Macau, near Hong Kong. After a 16-hour flight and two more hours to bed, I accidentally had taken too many sleeping pills. I must have looked as haggard as an overripe peach the next day at Manny's press conference. I stood on the fringe and said nothing. When it was over and the crowd was shuffling away, Manny walked straight to me, put his hands on my shoulders and said, "How are you feeling?"

I felt thanked.



Pictured left to right: Shane Mosley, Jr., Fernando "El Feroz" Vargas. Diego Magdaleno

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RATINGS

The Ring Ratings through fights of August 15, 2020

BOXING IS BACK-ISH, WITH OUR "COMING UP" PAGE STARTING TO LOOK A BIT MORE PRE-APOCALYPTIC, BUT THERE STILL WASN'T MUCH GOING ON BEFORE THE MID-AUGUST CUTOFF. HERE ARE THE DIVISIONS THAT SAW SOME ACTION:

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: No. 1-rated David Benavidez was stripped of his WBC belt after flagrantly missing weight ahead of his fight against Roamer Alexis Angulo (unrated), but he did stop Angulo in 10 and insists that he's staying at 168. It seems he and IBF titleholder Caleb Plant (No. 2) don't like each other much and want to sort some things out.

WELTERWEIGHT: If you read The Ring, you know how we feel about Vergil Ortiz, and the 2019 Prospect of the Year kept his record perfect (16-0, 16 KOs) with a methodical stoppage of veteran Colombian Samuel Vargas (unrated), who finished on his feet after seven rounds of being too tough for his own good. Welterweight is such a stacked division that the 22-year-old Ortiz remains outside the top 10, though. A couple weeks later, Minneapolis native Jamal James (unrated) also stamped himself as a potential 147-pound VIP with a unanimous decision over onetime title challenger Thomas Dulorme (that challenge came against Terence Crawford, unfortunately for Dulorme).

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: As with Ortiz, Oscar Valdez is a guy who surely won't remain without a ranking next to his name for long. The former featherweight titleholder TKO'd Jayson Velez (unrated) in the 10th round after three knockdowns, but the Ratings Panel was split on whether to bring him in after struggling a little to beat the shopworn Puerto Rican (who, to his and Valdez's credit, had never been stopped). In the end, the panelists decided that Valdez still needs a signature win at 130 to gain entry.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT: Angelo Leo (No. 10 last month) picked up the WBO belt with a wide unanimous decision over Tramaine Williams (unrated). Williams was a late substitution plucked from the undercard after original opponent Stephen Fulton tested positive for COVID-19, but he was an undefeated up-and-comer in his own right, and Leo's winning performance was enough to earn a promotion to No. 7. Some panelists suggested he rise as high as No. 6.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT: Srisaket Sor Rungvisai notched a pretty good, if pretty forgettable, unanimous decision over former titleholder Amnat Ruenroeng (unrated), but Sor Rungvisai is already the No. 1 contender in the division, so there's nowhere for him to go anyway.

It also bears mentioning that The Ring's No. 1 pound-for-pound female fighter, Cecilia Braekhus, was stunningly upset via majority decision in a lonely Oklahoma ring by Jessica McCaskill on August 15. Despite some inauspicious pre-fight stats – 35 years old with an 8-2 record in her first bout above 140 pounds – McCaskill threw almost twice as many punches as her opponent (though Braekhus beat her by one punch in the "landed" category), and it was enough to win over the judges. The new undisputed welterweight champion seized a backbreaking collection of belts (IBF, WBA, WBC and WBO) with the victory, but Braekhus was characteristically noble after her only loss in 37 professional fights. "I'm proud and happy to pass the torch to her," she said. She also hinted that it could be her last fight.

POUND FOR POUND

1 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

2 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

3 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

4 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)

5 **ALEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)

6 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)

7 **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)

8 **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

9 **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

10 **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C **TYSON FURY** RING, WBC
U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)

1 **ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO
U.K. • 23-1-0 (21 KOs)

2 **DILLIAN WHYTE**
U.K. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)

3 **DEONTAY WILDER**
U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)

4 **LUIS ORTIZ**
Cuba • 31-2-0 (26 KOs)

5 **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
U.S. • 33-2-0 (22 KOs)

6 **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)

7 **JOSEPH PARKER**
New Zealand • 27-2-0 (21 KOs)

8 **MICHAEL HUNTER**
U.S. • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)

9 **OSCAR RIVAS**
Colombia • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)

10 **KUBRAT PULEV**
Bulgaria • 28-1-0 (14 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
Latvia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

2 **YUNIEL DORTICOS** IBF
Cuba • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)

3 **ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC
Congo • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)

4 **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
Poland • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)

5 **KEVIN LERENA**
S. Africa • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 **ANDREW TABITI**
U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)

7 **LAWRENCE OKOLIE**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

8 **ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA
France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

9 **THABISO MCHUNU**
S. Africa • 22-5-0 (13 KOs)

10 **MICHAL CIESLAK**
Poland • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

2 **DMITRY BIVOL** WBA
Russia • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

3 **SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)

4 **ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
Colombia • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)

5 **JEAN PASCAL**
Canada • 35-6-1 (20 KOs)

6 **BADOU JACK**
Sweden • 22-3-3 (13 KOs)

7 **MARCUS BROWNE**
U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)

8 **JOE SMITH JR.**
U.S. • 25-3-0 (20 KOs)

9 **DOMINIC BOESEL**
Germany • 30-1-0 (12 KOs)

10 **ANTHONY YARDE**
U.K. • 19-1-0 (18 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **CALLUM SMITH** RING, WBA
U.K. • 27-0-0 (19 KOs)

1 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ**
U.S. • 23-0-0 (20 KOs)

2 **CALEB PLANT** IBF
U.S. • 20-0-0 (12 KOs)

3 **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
U.S. • 33-2-1 (24 KOs)

4 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

5 **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** WBO
U.K. • 29-0-0 (14 KOs)

6 **CALEB TRUAX**
U.S. • 31-4-2 (19 KOs)

7 **JOHN RYDER**
U.K. • 28-5-0 (16 KOs)

8 **FEDOR CHUDINOV**
Russia • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)

9 **DAVID LEMIEUX**
Canada • 41-4-0 (34 KOs)

10 **DANIEL JACOBS**
U.S. • 36-3-0 (30 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of August 15, 2020

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C** **CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA
  Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)
- **1** **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF
  Kaz. • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)
- **2** **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO
  U.S. • 29-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **JERMALL CHARLO** WBC
  U.S. • 30-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **4** **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO**
  Ukraine • 13-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOTA MURATA**
  Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **KAMIL SZEREMETA**
  Poland • 21-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **7** **CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
  U.K. • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **8** **MACIEJ SULECKI**
  Poland • 28-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **9** **ROB BRANT**
  U.S. • 25-2-0 (17 KOs)
- **10** **LIAM WILLIAMS**
  U.K. • 22-2-1 (17 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JERMELL CHARLO** WBC
  U.S. • 33-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **JEISON ROSARIO** IBF, WBA
  Dom. Rep. • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **3** **JULIAN WILLIAMS**
  U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **4** **JARRETT HURD**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **ERISLANDY LARA**
  Cuba • 26-3-3 (15 KOs)
- **6** **BRIAN CASTANO**
  Argentina • 16-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **7** **TONY HARRISON**
  U.S. • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **MICHEL SORO**
  France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **9** **ERICKSON LUBIN**
  U.S. • 22-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **10** **PATRICK TEIXEIRA** WBO
  Brazil • 31-1-0 (22 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC
  U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO
  U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)
- **3** **MANNY PACQUIAO** WBA
  Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4** **KEITH THURMAN**
  U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5** **SHAWN PORTER**
  U.S. • 30-3-1 (17 KOs)
- **6** **DANNY GARCIA**
  U.S. • 36-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **YORDENIS UGAS**
  Cuba • 25-4-0 (12 KOs)
- **8** **KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV**
  Uzbekistan • 17-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **SERGEY LIPINETS**
  Russia • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **MIKEY GARCIA**
  U.S. • 40-1-0 (30 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C** **JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA
  U.K. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **1** **JOSE RAMIREZ** WBC, WBO
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **REGIS PROGRAIS**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)
- **3** **IVAN BARANCHYK**
  Russia • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **VIKTOR POSTOL**
  Ukraine • 31-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **KIRYL RELIKH**
  Belarus • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **6** **JOSE ZEPEDA**
  U.S. • 32-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **7** **MARIO BARRIOS**
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **8** **ARNOLD BARBOZA**
  U.S. • 23-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **9** **BATYRZHAN JUKEMBAYEV**
  Kazakhstan • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **10** **SHOHJAHON ERGASHEV**
  Uzbekistan • 18-0-0 (16 KOs)

No. 1-rated welterweight Errol Spence will face No. 6-rated Danny Garcia on November 21. Location TBA.

No. 2-rated welterweight Terence Crawford awaits his next assignment. There is no date or opponent in play.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C** **VASILIY LOMACHENKO** RING, WBA, WBO
  Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** IBF
  U.S. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **2** **DEVIN HANEY** WBC
  U.S. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **RICHARD COMMEY**
  Ghana • 29-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **4** **LUKE CAMPBELL**
  U.K. • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **RYAN GARCIA**
  U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **6** **ROBERT EASTER**
  U.S. • 22-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **JAVIER FORTUNA**
  Dom. Rep. • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **JORGE LINARES**
  Venezuela • 47-5-0 (29 KOs)
- **9** **EMMANUEL TAGOE**
  Ghana • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **RANCES BARTHELEMY**
  Cuba • 27-1-1 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

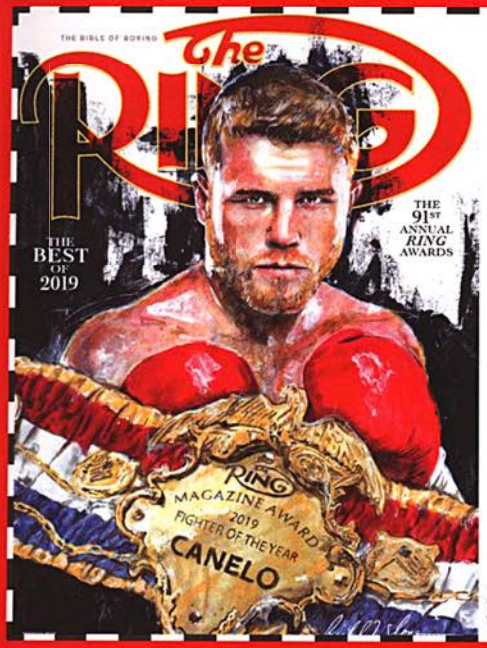
- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **MIGUEL BERCHELT** WBC
  Mexico • 37-1-0 (33 KOs)
- **2** **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** IBF
  U.S. • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **JAMEL HERRING** WBO
  U.S. • 21-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **4** **TEVIN FARMER**
  U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
- **5** **RENE ALVARADO**
  Nicaragua • 32-8-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **MASAYUKI ITO**
  Japan • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **ANDREW CANCIO**
  U.S. • 21-5-2 (16 KOs)
- **8** **MIGUEL ROMAN**
  Mexico • 62-13-0 (47 KOs)
- **9** **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV**
  Russia • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **CHRIS COLBERT**
  U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JOSH WARRINGTON** IBF
  U.K. • 30-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC
  U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **XU CAN** WBA
  China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **4** **KID GALAHAD**
  U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **MARK MAGSAYO**
  Phil. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **6** **TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR**
  Mongolia • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **7** **JESSIE MAGDALENO**
  U.S. • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **8** **RUBEN VILLA**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **9** **MIGUEL MARRIAGA**
  Colombia • 29-3-0 (25 KOs)
- **10** **CHRISTOPHER DIAZ**
  Puerto Rico • 26-2-0 (16 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **REY VARGAS** WBC
  Mexico • 34-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA
  Uzbekistan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **3** **DANIEL ROMAN**
  U.S. • 27-3-1 (10 KOs)
- **4** **RYOSUKE IWASA**
  Japan • 27-3-0 (17 KOs)
- **5** **BRANDON FIGUEROA**
  U.S. • 20-0-1 (15 KOs)
- **6** **TOMOKI KAMEDA**
  Japan • 36-3-0 (20 KOs)
- **7** **ANGELO LEO**
  U.S. • 20-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **8** **HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA**
  Japan • 21-2-2 (14 KOs)
- **9** **AZAT HOVHANNISYAN**
  Armenia • 18-3-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **STEPHEN FULTON**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (8 KOs)



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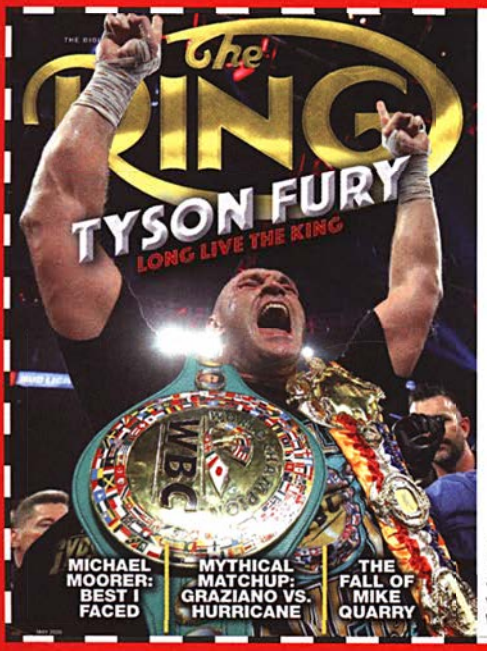

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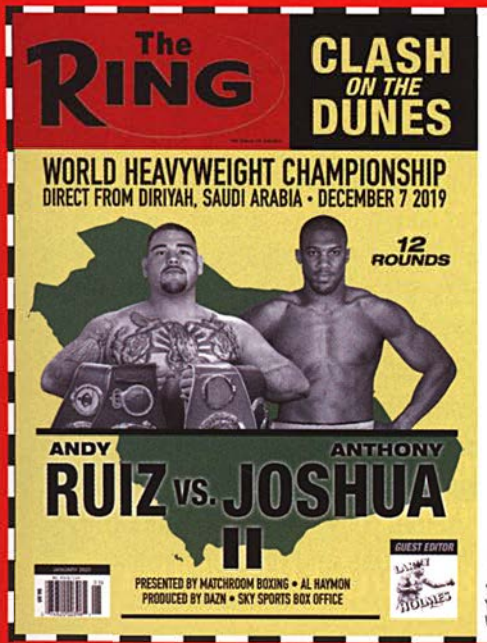

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RATINGS

Through fights of August 15, 2020

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA — Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE** — Phil. • 40-6-0 (26 KOs)
- **2** **NORDINE OUBAALI** WBC — France • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO — Philippines • 29-4–0 (20 KOs)
- **4** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ** — P.R. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **JASON MOLONEY** — Australia • 21-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **6** **ZOLANI TETE** — S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **TAKUMA INOUE** — Japan • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **8** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX** — Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **9** **OSCAR NEGRETE** — U.S. • 19-2-2 (7 KOs)
- **10** **MIKE PLANIA** — Philippines • 24-1–0 (12 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBC — Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI** — Thailand • 48-5-1 (41 KOs)
- **2** **ROMAN GONZALEZ** WBA — Nicaragua • 49-2-0 (41 KOs)
- **3** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO — Japan • 25-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **4** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF — Phil. • 32-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **5** **KHALID YAFAI** — U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6** **JOSHUA FRANCO** — U.S. • 17-1-2 (8 KOs)
- **7** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.** — Mexico • 33-4-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **ANDREW MOLONEY** — Australia • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **JEYVIER CINTRON** — P.R. • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **CARLOS CUADRAS** — Mexico • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)

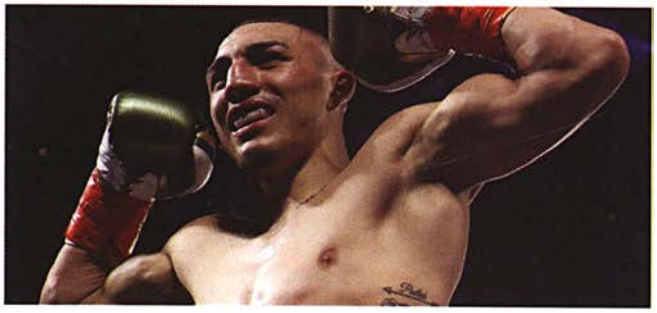
FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KOSEI TANAKA** — Japan • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **MORUTI MTHALANE** IBF — S. Africa • 39-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **3** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC — Mexico • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA — Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **CHARLIE EDWARDS** — U.K. • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW SELBY** — U.K. • 13-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **7** **MASAYUKI KURODA** — Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **8** **JUNTO NAKATANI** — Japan • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **9** **CRISTOFER ROSALES** — Nicaragua • 29-5-0 (20 KOs)
- **10** **GIEMEL MAGRAMO** — Phil. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA — Japan • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC — Japan • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **HEKKIE BUDLER** — S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **3** **CARLOS CANIZALES** — Venezuela • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **4** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF — Nicaragua • 35-2-0 (30 KOs)
- **5** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO — Mexico • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **6** **TETSUYA HISADA** — Japan • 34-10-2 (20 KOs)
- **7** **EDWARD HENO** — Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)
- **8** **SHO KIMURA** — Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL MATELLON** — Cuba • 11-0-2 (6 KOs)
- **10** **AGUSTIN GAUTO** — Argentina • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)

Ring Magazine lightweight champion Vasiliy Lomachenko will face No. 1-rated challenger Teofimo Lopez.



The unbeaten Lopez brings youth, talent, speed, power and the IBF title to the table for the showdown with Lomachenko.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** WBC — Thailand • 54-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA — Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO — Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **BYRON ROJAS** — Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **5** **VIC SALUDAR** — Phil. • 20-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **JOSE ARGUMEDO** — Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **SIMPIWE KONKCO** — S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)
- **8** **PEDRO TADURAN** IBF — Phil. • 14-2-1 (11 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL VALLADARES** — Mexico • 22-1-1 (13 KOs)
- **10** **MELVIN JERUSALEM** — Phil. • 15-2-0 (9 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED
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Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

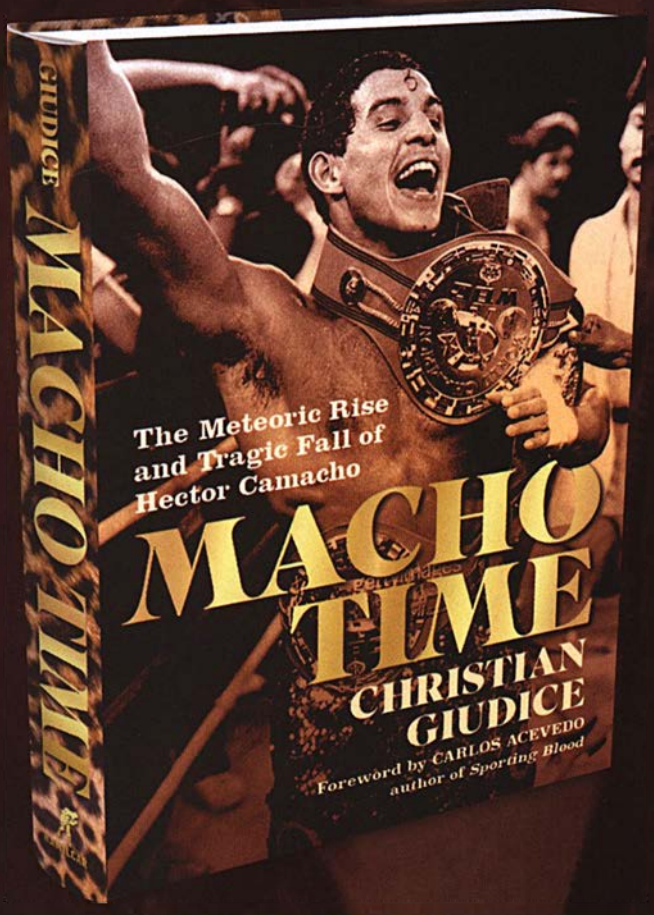
A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

MACHO TIME

The Meteoric Rise and Tragic Fall of Hector Camacho

by Christian Giudice



"In yet another skillful excavation of a dazzling Latino champion, Christian Giudice—the author of acclaimed biographies of Roberto Duran, Alexis Arguello and Wilfredo Gomez—follows Hector 'Macho' Camacho from his embattled childhood in Spanish Harlem, to the heights of his electrifying yet too-brief stardom and onto his abject end by hail of gunfire in a carful of cocaine. It is a compelling journey."

—Mark Kram, Jr., author of *Smokin' Joe: The Life of Joe Frazier*

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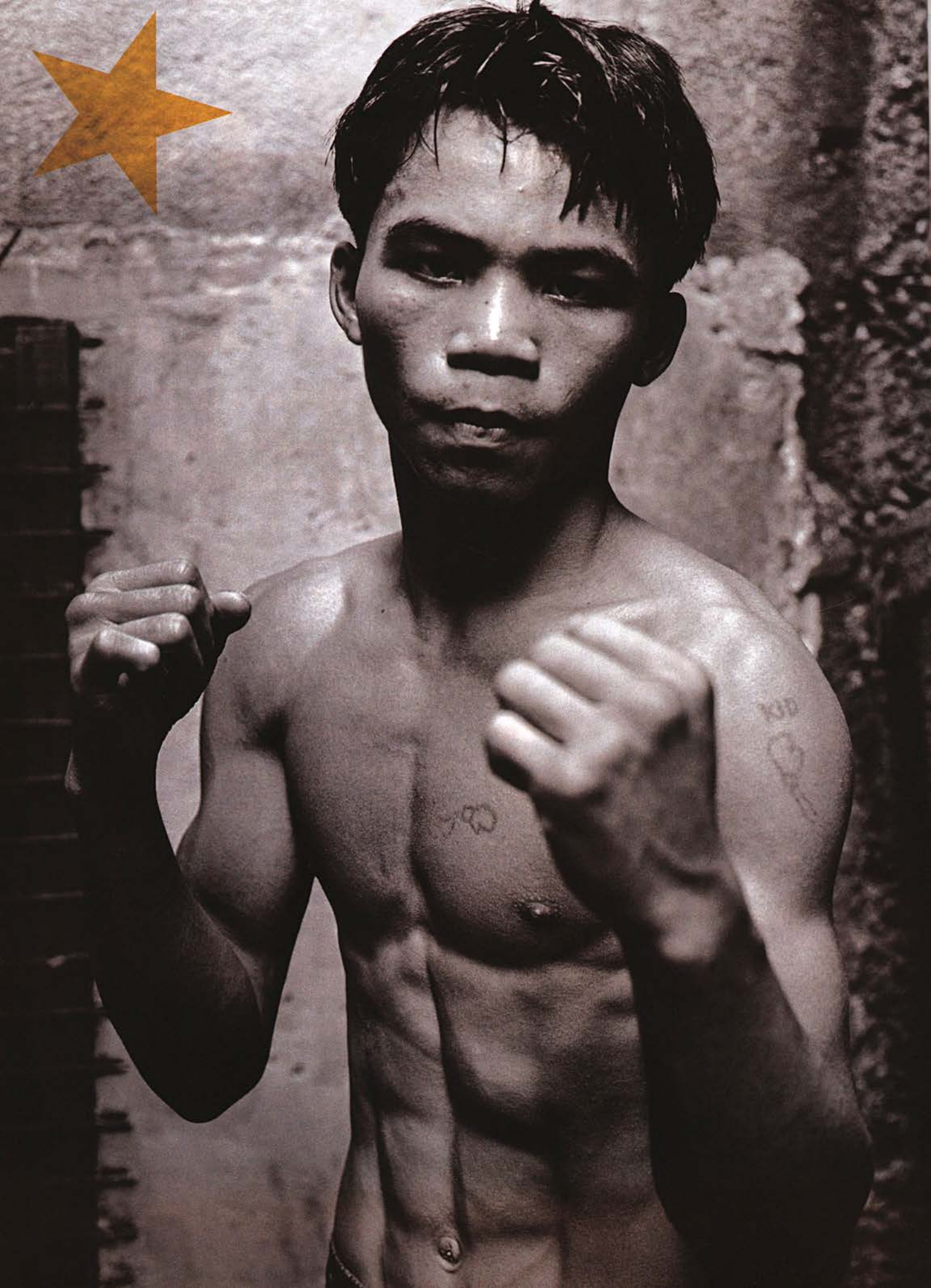


SOWING THE SEEDS

LIKE MANY FIGHTERS WHO GO ON TO ACHIEVE COLOSSAL SUCCESS, **MANNY PACQUIAO** CAME FROM VERY HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

By **Ryan Songalia**

There wasn't much to suggest that this two-hour boat ride from Manila to Sablayan Island in January 1995 would be noteworthy at all. If not for one of the passengers, a 16-year-old named Manny Pacquiao, it would have been just another sojourn for young Filipino men traveling to receive a small purse to trade blows with other young men.

Once docked, the trip took another three hours by land to a small, covered basketball court. The malnourished Pacquiao weighed just 98 pounds for his fight and filled his pockets full of heavy objects (reportedly rocks and ball bearings) to make it to 106 pounds. Since he was under 18, he told the Games and Amusements Board that his birth certificate was back home in General Santos City and that he'd get it to them when he could.

The purse was just 1,000 pesos, equivalent then to $30, for Pacquiao to outpoint Edmund Ignacio over four rounds, but for a boy accustomed to drinking water for dinner because his mother didn't have food for her five children, who slept on the streets after running away from home at age 14, and who sold donuts on the streets for a few pesos to stay alive, it was all the incentive he needed.

Long before he was flying across the Pacific for training camps in Hollywood, before Bob Dylan and Sylvester Stallone would drop by the Wild Card Boxing Club to watch him work out, Pacquiao would sweat away at the LM Gym on Paquita Street in Sampaloc. It sat on about 200 square meters of land, tucked in a labyrinth of narrow streets, before being torn down in 2009 (Pacquiao erected his "MP Tower" office and gym on the site). The equipment was worn out, the air smelled of urine from a wall near the ring that fighters used to relieve themselves, and yet this small gym was the training grounds for numerous world champions, including Luisito Espinosa, Morris East and Rolando Pascua. Pacquiao had been brought from General Santos City along with seven other boxers to the gym owned by Polding Correa, a well-off construction businessman from Malabon who managed boxers as a hobby. During the day, the boxers would work on the construction sites for Correa and then train in the afternoon. Pacquiao and the rest of his GenSan crew would sleep on the floor, one next to the other.

Correa entrusted Pacquiao's day-to-day business affairs to Rod Nazario, a promoter with decades of experience, and Lito Mondejar, one of the co-founders of the gym. Nazario and Mondejar had a popular boxing show called *Blow by Blow*, which ran on the national public television station. Pacquiao soon became one of its star attractions. As an amateur, he'd been trained by Dizon Cordero, but Leonardo Pablo took over when he turned

"HE WAS LIKE A STREET FIGHTER. HE HAD THE HEART." - GERRY PENALOSA

The skinny, teenaged Pacquiao at the LM Gym in Manila was a long way from his welterweight heyday.

professional. Pablo, an older man who was blind in one eye, had been a fighter himself. With Pablo in his corner, Pacquiao won decisions in four of his first five bouts before he began sitting down on his punches to create knockouts.

"In those early days, he was very reckless. He didn't have much of a defense," said Joaquin "Quinito" Henson, who commentated on many of those early fights with Ronnie Nathanielsz for *Blow by Blow*. "He had a lot of foot movement but no rhythm to his movement."

"His style before was unlike when he went to Freddie Roach," said former two-weight titleholder Gerry Penalosa. "He was like a street fighter. He had the heart. He wanted to kill you."

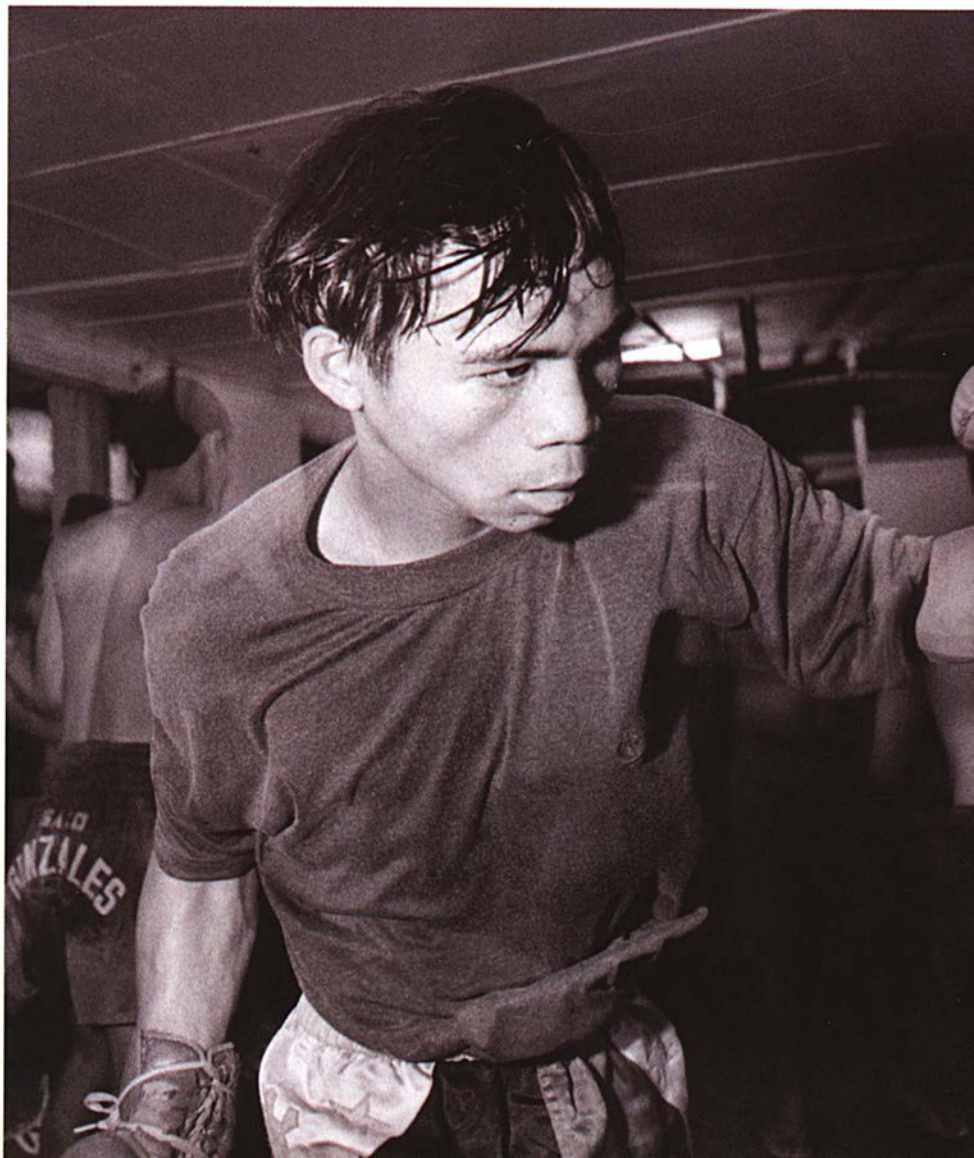
As much glory as Pacquiao was gaining in these early fights, there was also great sorrow to counterbalance it. Two of the other fighters whom he'd traveled to Manila with would die shortly after arriving. Eddie Cadalzo, one of the fighters who slept on the floor alongside Pacquiao, died in his sleep. Another fighter, Eugene Barutag, died from injuries suffered in a fight on December 9, 1995. Pacquiao was in the next fight on the card, the main event, and cradled his close friend's head in his gloves before he was taken to the hospital. With barely a moment to process what had happened, Pacquiao had to set aside his grief and go 10 rounds with Rolando Toyogon, winning a decision.

Nearly a year after turning pro, Pacquiao no longer had to put weights in his pockets before stepping on the scales. He was filling out his frame, as evidenced by his weigh-in mishap in a fight against a tough spoiler named Rustico Torrecampo in February 1996. Pacquiao came in a pound over the limit and had to wear eight-ounce gloves while Torrecampo wore six ounces. For the first two rounds, Pacquiao looked as sharp as he ever had, darting in and out, setting up his left hand with his jab and repeatedly stunning the underdog. Everything was going well until it wasn't. Torrecampo caught Pacquiao flush on the jaw with a left in the third round, just as Pacquiao went to throw his own. When Pacquiao finally got back to his feet minutes after losing by knockout, he started bouncing on his toes and pumping his gloves like the fight was about to start.

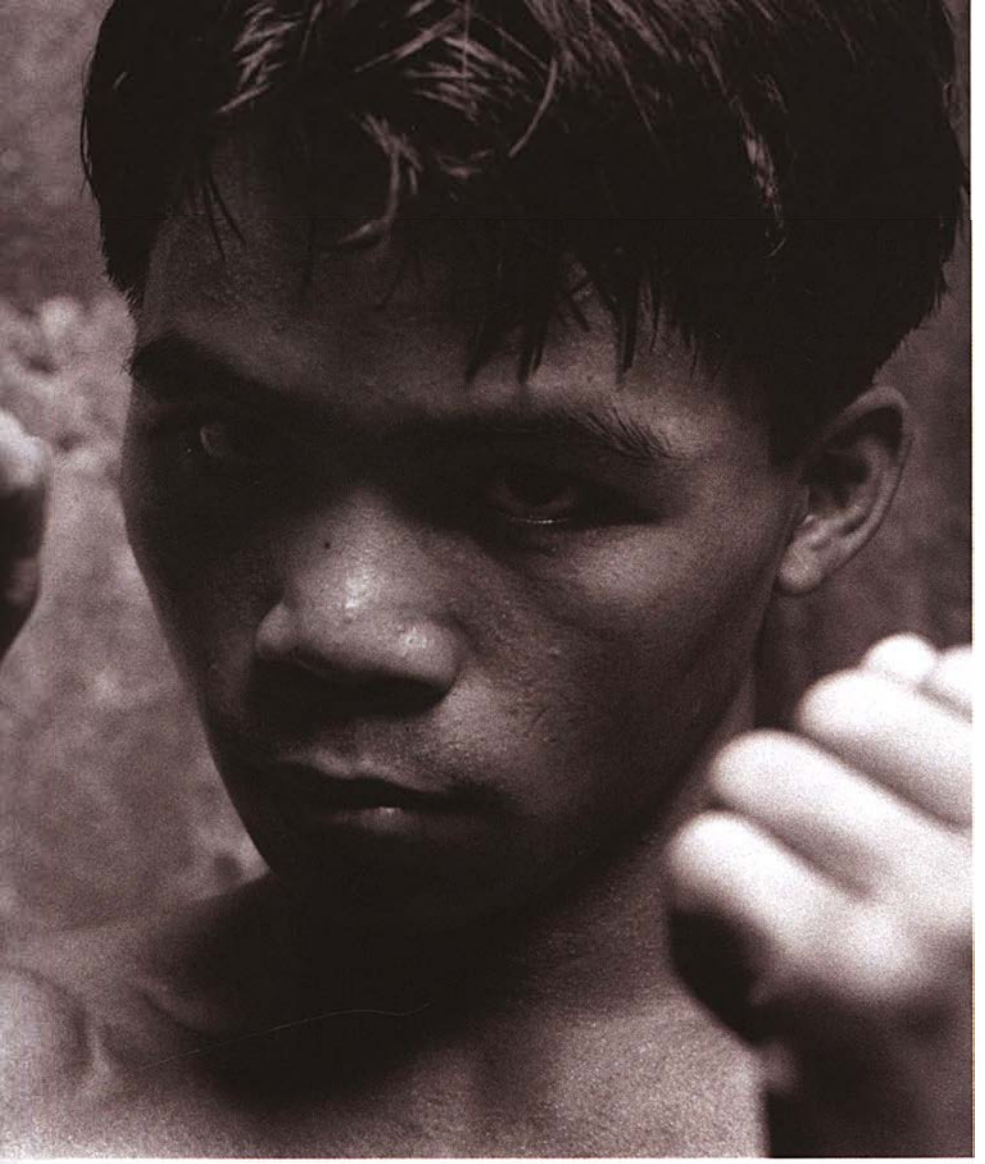
The Torrecampo fight was the first time Rick Staheli had seen Pacquiao. An American military vet who taught himself to train by ordering VHS tapes from the U.S., he says he'd never seen a crowd as raucous as that night in Mandaluyong City. Despite the result, Pacquiao made an impression on him. Staheli began helping Manny in the gym and then took over as his head trainer in 1997, splitting the 10 percent cut with Pablo, who remained as assistant. Among the first things Staheli worked on was getting Pacquiao's diet in order. As perhaps the largest flyweight in the world, Pacquiao's greatest nemesis would be the scales. So Staheli substituted brown rice for white rice and multigrain bread for the sugar-filled pandesal bread.

"I'll never forget Manny, he's like, 'Coach, why does it have peanuts in the bread?' And I said they were actually little bits of barley in the wheat bread," said Staheli.

Pacquiao's stock got a major boost in June 1997 when he knocked out the dangerous Chockchai Chockvivat in five rounds to win the coveted



Driven by ambition, Pacquiao became known for an intense work ethic very early in his career ...



... and he possessed a true fighter's mentality to go along with it.

OPBF flyweight title. Next, he traveled to Cebu City to face Melvin Magramo, a rugged if unrefined slugger who almost never stopped throwing wide punches.

So enthralled was he by the historic Cebu Coliseum, a place where legends like Flash Elorde and Bernabe Villacampo had fought, that Pacquiao left the dressing room and went out to admire the crowd.

"We chased him to the ring, and I go, 'C'mon Manny, you're not warmed up,'" said Staheli. "And he's just looking around. He loved that spotlight."

Shortly after the bell rang, Magramo caught Pacquiao cold, dazing the 18-year-old, who continued throwing punches on autopilot. Staheli could sense something was not right with his fighter. When the ring card girl passed by before the sixth, the trainer decided to test Pacquiao's mental faculties: "I asked, 'What round are we in?' He said 'Cebu.' And I said, 'Close enough.'" Staheli did his best to buy Pacquiao time to recover, taking his time fixing the glove tape in the eighth, much to the displeasure of bettors at ringside. Pacquiao won a decision, and Staheli found the quickest exit.

As Pacquiao's standing in the ratings went up, so did his paydays. Staheli says Pacquiao's purses rose from about $1,000 for the Chockvivat fight to $3,000 for the Magramo fight, and then $7,000 for a first-round body shot knockout win over Narong Datchthuyawat on the Luisito Espinosa vs. Carlos Rios WBC featherweight title fight in December 1997.

Pacquiao's rise caught the eye of Penalosa, who was passing through Manila on his way north to the mountainous city of Baguio for training camp. Penalosa, then the WBC junior bantamweight titleholder, was looking for a southpaw to spar with to prepare for his fight against Young Joo Cho in November 1997.

When the bell rang at LM Gym, the gap in experience showed.

"[Penalosa] just drummed the hell out of [Pacquiao]," said Staheli. "He actually knocked him down with a body shot. It was supposed to be four rounds, and he knocked him down in the second." Staheli turned to Dodie Boy Penalosa, who was training his younger brother, and told him he was cutting the session by a round. Pacquiao came out for the third, swinging wild to impose himself, but Penalosa, the consummate technician, used that opportunity to take target practice.

Despite the outcome, Gerry Penalosa saw potential in the teenager.

"I knew it from the beginning that this guy would become big; he would become something," said Penalosa.

Penalosa ended up paying Pacquiao 10,000 pesos for a month to work as his chief sparring partner. More than the money, it was an opportunity to learn from the fighter who Roach would later describe as the Philippines' most skilled ever.

Pacquiao had his first ever fight abroad in May 1998, knocking out Shin Terao in one round in Japan. His second time getting his passport stamped that year would be a much steeper proposition.

It was two in the afternoon, a hot day at a public market just outside of Bangkok, Thailand, when Pacquiao got his first shot at a world title. Chatchai Sasakul, who held the WBC flyweight belt, was a popular star in his country, having been a 1988 Olympian. He won the title in Japan a year earlier, handing Yuri

Arbachakov his only defeat, and had a boxer-counterpuncher style that seemed the perfect foil for the wild youngster. A hometown decision was the least of Staheli's concerns.

"I knew he had to win by knockout," said Staheli. "Forget bad decisions; this guy's a good boxer. He's a much better boxer than Manny."

For the first seven rounds, that's exactly how it played out, with the much larger Pacquiao stalking Sasakul, who calmly turned and landed counters upstairs and down. The pressure and body-punching from Pacquiao slowly began to wear down Sasakul, whose hands began to drop from fatigue. "He had strong determination," remembers Sasakul. "He wanted to get the world championship from me very much." That's exactly what Pacquiao did in the eighth, landing a looping left to the jaw that put Sasakul on his stomach. Sasakul struggled to get back to his feet before falling face-first and tumbling to his back.

"Nobody cheered for me," laughed Pacquiao. "They think that I'm an opponent for a tuneup fight for the champion of Thailand. But I knocked him out."

Pacquiao's popularity at home skyrocketed after winning the title. Shortly after arriving back home in Manila, a representative from the apparel brand No Fear locked in a deal that would define the fighter's look for years. The billboards along major roadways like EDSA would soon bear his face, and A-listers in the country lined up to be photographed alongside him.

"When we staged his fights in Cotabato, people from all over Mindanao traveled long hours just to see him fight. Some arrived the night before and they waited for the gates to open as early as 6 a.m.," said Manny Pinol, who had just been elected vice-governor of North Cotabato when he promoted a non-title card headlined by Pacquiao against Todd Makelim in February 1999. "I would say he is the most popular Filipino boxer ever, and his Cinderella story of rags to riches adds to the drama."

Pacquiao dispatched Makelim in three rounds; it'd be his last fight with Staheli in his corner, as Pablo once again assumed the head-trainer role. Pacquiao headlined next at Araneta Coliseum, the site of "The Thrilla in Manila." His opponent for the mandatory defense was Gabriel Mira, the first of many Mexican boxers he'd face. Though just 19-7-1 (15 KOs) entering the fight, Mira showed that he had some real power, hurting Pacquiao to the body with a left hook in the second round. After catching his breath, Pacquiao went to work and landed two lefts at the end of the session that put Mira on the canvas. "I felt good until he hit me in the last seconds of the round," said Mira. "I did not recover 100 percent. I was fighting by instinct." Pacquiao would score another knockdown in the third and three more in the fourth to win the fight by TKO.

One of the conditions for getting the fight against Sasakul was that the Thai promoter, Virat Vachirarattanawong, would get an option on a future Pacquiao fight. He cashed that in by bringing Pacquiao back to Thailand in September 1999 to face Medgoen Singsurat. By then, Pacquiao's body had matured and making 112 pounds was becoming a more difficult feat. The day of the weigh-in, Pacquiao was still three pounds over, and the team became desperate. "They were rubbing calamansi (a sour citrus fruit) on his tongue to make him salivate, as if that would make a difference," said Henson. Other ideas included cutting his hair and turning the bathroom into a makeshift sauna, but there wasn't another drop of perspiration to be collected. Pacquiao missed the limit by a pound and was stripped of his belt. So drained was he that a shot that barely glanced off his midsection put him down for the count.

When Pacquiao returned to the ring three months later, he did so as a junior featherweight, passing two divisions to hit the restart button. Gone was Pablo, and Emil Romano, a former pro himself, was now in charge. "I told him before that you'll knock out all of your opponents in the 122-pound division," Romano said. "All of his fights with me, he won by knockout." After four weeks to adjust to his new division and trainer, Pacquiao became the top 122-pounder in the Philippines by demolishing Reynante Jamili in two rounds.

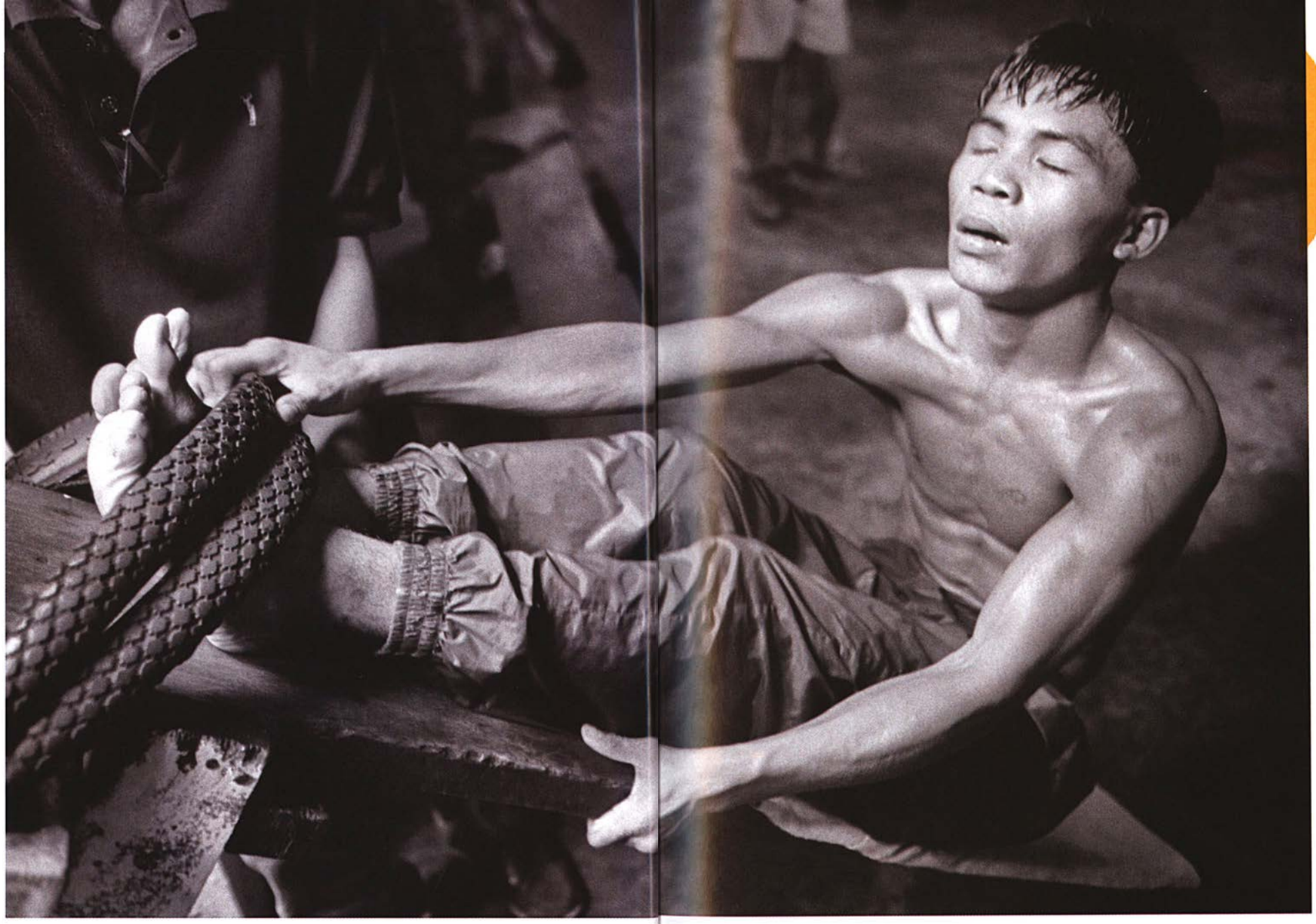
It was smooth sailing until October 2000, when Pacquiao was matched with Nedal Hussein, an undefeated Australian with an iron chin and a serious punch. In the fourth round, Pacquiao found himself down by, of all punches, a jab. He smiled, half-embarrassed and half-dazed, and rose up after a long count by Carlos Padilla. "If you look at it, it was 17.1 seconds," said Hussein. "I always trained against a southpaw (and knew) that the easiest punch to land was a jab. I didn't have to load up that much for him to walk into it."

Pacquiao was ahead on all three cards by the time the fight was stopped in the 10th because of a cut over Hussein's left eye, which Hussein insists wasn't bad enough to warrant a TKO.

Romano's time in Pacquiao's corner would be brief, lasting a little more than a year. When an opportunity arose for Pacquiao to travel to the states in search of the big fights, Romano stayed behind to look after the fighters in his stable who he'd been with longer. If Pacquiao had not walked into the Wild Card in Hollywood and so impressed Roach on the mitts that he took him on as a fighter, we may not have seen the greatest trainer-fighter tandem since Muhammad Ali and Angelo Dundee. Had he not been in the States, on weight and ready to step in for an injured Enrique Sanchez against IBF junior featherweight titleholder Lehlohonolo Ledwaba on two weeks' notice, who knows how long it would have taken for him to break out.

But those events did take place, and it was the overlooked battles and setbacks that prepared him to make the most of the opportunities that lay ahead.

"I think that's his destiny," said Penalosa. "That's why he became Manny Pacquiao. He's once in a lifetime." RMO



GERHARD JOREN

Body sore and racked with pain, the young Pacquiao trained in squalor with primitive, makeshift gym equipment.

Pacquiao was an experienced, albeit completely unknown, fighter when he ventured to Las Vegas to take on IBF junior featherweight titleholder Lehlo Ledwaba.

THE THUNDERBOLT

VETERAN SPORTSWRITER AND 2020 INTERNATIONAL BOXING HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE **BERNARD FERNANDEZ** RECALLS THE NIGHT HE CAUGHT PAC MAN FEVER

By **Bernard Fernandez**

Call it love at first fight.

Ed Schuyler Jr., the longtime boxing writer for The Associated Press, now retired, was recalling the moment when he fell head over heels for a certain lightweight of whom he had heard a few sketchy reports but had not previously observed in person. All it took was a brief glimpse for Fast Eddie to identify the visitor from Panama, who was making his first appearance in a United States ring, as a future star not only in America but everywhere people deeply cared about fights and fighters.

That initial sighting of Roberto Duran actually came during a sparring session that predated his one-round wipeout of capable journeyman Benny Huertas in Madison Square

ED JACOBSOHN

Garden on September 13, 1971 (on the undercard of WBA lightweight titleholder Ken Buchanan's 15-round unanimous decision over another Panamanian, Ismael Laguna). But watching some rookie hit a home run in batting practice isn't quite the same as seeing the same guy belt a game-winner out of the park on the big stage of Yankee Stadium.

"We went up to Grossinger's in the Catskills to watch Ken Buchanan train," Schuyler, now 85 and a 2010 inductee into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, recalled about the time when the sketchy reports he'd heard of Duran began to come into much sharper focus. "Buchanan wasn't in the gym yet, but in the ring was this dusky, dark-haired guy, Roberto Duran. He was so ... so ... I don't know, like an animal. A panther. I just had this sense that this kid (Duran was 20 at the time) was born to fight."

It isn't as if Duran burst onto the scene from complete anonymity with his thrashing of Huertas; he had come in 24-0 with 21 wins inside the distance, all of those wins having come in Panama (21) or Mexico (3). But it is reflective of many Americans' sense of entitlement in that Jurassic period of pre-satellite communications that if something didn't happen here and wasn't witnessed by U.S. fans with their own eyes, it was akin to it never actually happening at all.

History has a way of repeating itself, and my Schuyleresque moment of clarity, an epiphany if you will, came on June 23, 2001, in Las Vegas' MGM Grand Garden. I was there primarily to chronicle the main event

JED JACOBSOHN

PACQUIAO WAS ALL THAT HE SEEMED TO BE, AND THEN SOME, IN PUMMELING LEDWABA.

for my newspaper, the Philadelphia Daily News, in which superstar Oscar De La Hoya enhanced his credentials as such by lifting the WBC 154-pound title from Spain's Javier Castillejo on an efficient, thoroughly one-sided and quite-expected 12-round unanimous decision. It wasn't as if the on-site attendance of 12,480 and an HBO Pay-Per-View audience yawned throughout another demonstration of "The Golden Boy's" superiority over a reasonably skilled but obviously

Ledwaba was unbeaten for eight years with five world title defenses to his credit, but he had no answers against Pacquiao.

outclassed opponent, but Castillejo, try as he might, was there to play the role of designated victim.

The real excitement that night, however, came much earlier in an undercard bout in which a mostly unknown (at least to American fight fans) Filipino southpaw, Manny Pacquiao, a late replacement for the injured Enrique Sanchez of Mexico, did unto South Africa's Lehlo Ledwaba what Duran had done to the unfortunate Huertas, but over a more extended period. Pacquiao's sixth-round knockout of Ledwaba, whom he floored three times and beat to a bloody pulp, was marked by utter domination from the opening bell. However, it was completely unexpected. Anyone who might have wanted to place a bet on the outcome would have come away either with a nice profit or a significantly lighter wallet. Ledwaba had gone in as such a prohibitive favorite that the Vegas sportsbooks did not post a line on the bout or accept wagers on a matchup that drew such little interest that the stands were still mostly unoccupied, as was press row.

Pacquiao improved to 33-2 with the impressive victory (he previously had fought 31 times in the Philippines, twice in Thailand and once in Japan), which brought him the IBF junior featherweight title, but as he exited the ring, it would have been premature to say that he had stamped himself, as had Duran in his U.S. debut, as a legend-in-the-making. The beatdown of Ledwaba was more like a pebble being tossed into a pool of still water; the circle created by the splash had begun to expand outward, for sure, but for "Pac Man" fever to reach full-fledged epidemic status, more and increasingly larger rocks would need to be chunked into more U.S. pools, with American TV and media climbing onto the Manny bandwagon in ever-increasing numbers.

For me, seated at a sparsely populated ringside for Pacquiao-Ledwaba, shooting the breeze with some of my colleagues as the De La Hoya-Castillejo fight drew closer instead of hanging around in the press room, it was like I alone had unearthed a buried treasure. Remember the scene in 1972's Best Picture, The Godfather, in which temporarily exiled American Michael Corleone is walking the hills in Sicily with two bodyguards when he glimpses the lovely Apollonia and is instantly mesmerized? It might be the best example ever captured on celluloid of someone falling in love at first sight.

"I think you got hit by the thunderbolt," one of the bodyguards tells the smitten Michael.

For any sports fan to be truly struck by a thunderbolt, the moment ideally should come without much, if any, advance warning. I therefore cannot

MGM GRAND
MGM GRAND

include the 9-year-old me becoming a forever-devoted fan of St. Louis Cardinals standout Stan Musial, who I saw play on TV for the first time in 1957, the season in which The Man captured his seventh and last National League batting title with a .351 average. I was enthralled by Musial's funky and unorthodox stance, but how could I say it was a thunderbolt moment when the guy had been a Major League player since 1941? I had come to the party, all right, but definitely as a late-arriving guest.

More akin to what Eddie Schuyler experienced with Duran and I with Pacquiao came when I was a young sportswriter for the Jackson (Mississippi) Daily News in 1973 and got the opportunity to cover a sophomore running back at Jackson State named Walter Payton, then still well below the national radar screen. In a story I authored for The Sporting News prior to the '75 NFL draft, I wrote that Payton not only was better than two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin of Ohio State, he was a *lot* better. The hate letters that poured in to TSN from Ohio proclaiming me an idiot were to be expected, but time proved that I was correct. My prediction did not certify me as qualified to be a pro football scout, but simply that I wasn't blind. I had a similar revelation when I was introduced to the basketball artistry of Pete Maravich, who brought his magic to my college, LSU.

But the blush of youth invariably gives way to harsh reality as the years toll by and true believers are confronted with the realization that nothing clearly exceptional lasts forever, especially with athletes who are as subject as anyone to the natural laws of diminishing returns, and perhaps even more so. Pacquiao was all that he had seemed to be, and then some, in pummeling Ledwaba, going on to become the first fighter ever to win titles in eight weight classes, from flyweight to junior middleweight. Now 41 years of age, his net worth, as of March, 2020, was estimated at $220 million by celebritynetworth.com and his popularity in his homeland is such that in 2016 he was elected to the Philippine Senate, where he is serving a six-year term. As a source of vast national pride to his countrymen, it would not be shocking if he were to someday run for president and win.

There have been wealthier fighters, and even some who merit higher places in the pecking order of all-time greats. But given where he started, as a child of abject poverty who was forced to drop out of high school to earn a living, to where he went both professionally and personally, a case can be made that few if any boxers have risen farther and faster, and stayed at or near the top as long, as has Emmanuel Dapidran Pacquiao.

Sportswriters are human like anyone else, and although professional decorum requires an attempt to maintain as much objectivity as possible, there is an obligation by those of us in the business to point out slippage by fighters for whom we have developed a certain attachment. Despite his many watershed successes – against current or likely future Hall of Famers De La Hoya, Shane Mosley, Juan Manuel Marquez, Miguel Cotto, Ricky Hatton, Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales – more than a few longtime riders on the Pac Man bandwagon got off when he went 5-4 during one dry spell and failed to win inside the distance over a 13-bout period from March 13, 2010, to July 15, 2018, when he finally ended things early again with a seventh-round TKO of Lucas Matthysse.

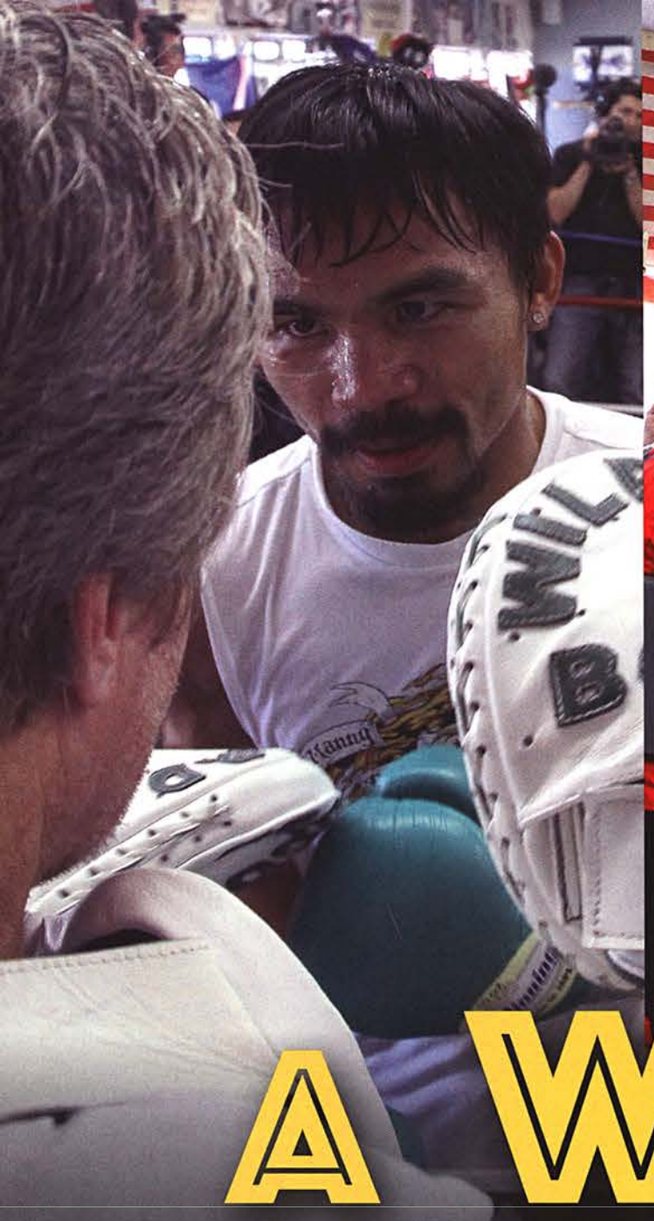
As far back as June 2017, I strove to remain unbiased in my assessment of Pacquiao. I went so far as to compare Pacquiao at his peak to the stunningly beautiful actress Elizabeth Taylor of the mid-to-late 1950s, with her violet eyes, creamy complexion and hourglass figure. But Taylor was just 34 when she won her second Academy Award in 1966, playing a frowsy, tart-tongued professor's wife in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? It must have been a stunning revelation to movie audiences that even Taylor's ravishing beauty could not endure forever, a parallel to the accelerated down phase I was anticipating for the Fab Filipino.

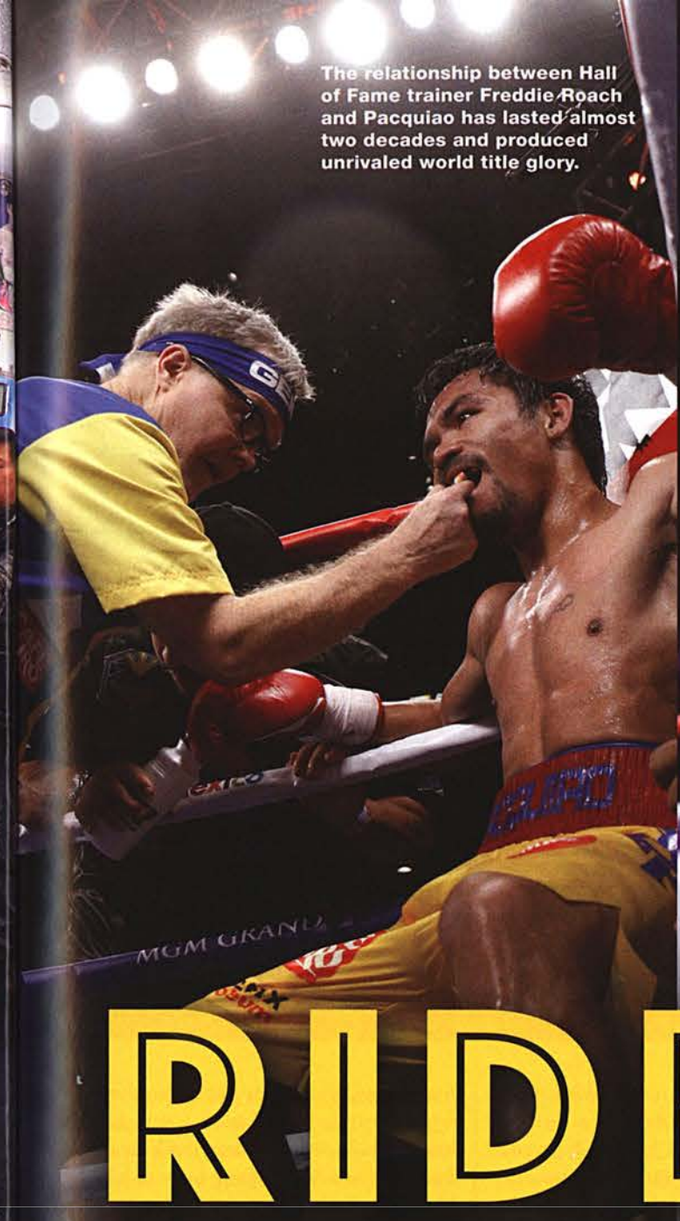
Well into what should be his dotage as a fighter, however, Pacquiao is seemingly as intent on impressing his more recent detractors as he was on winning over an earlier bunch the night the then-22-year-old phenom tuned up Ledwaba. He is presently on a three-bout winning streak, the last of which was a mild upset of WBA titleholder Keith Thurman on July 20, 2019, a fight in which I again mistakenly went with my head instead of my heart and picked Thurman to be the one to have his hand raised. Pacquiao now is ranked as the third-best welterweight in the world by The Ring and No. 2 by ESPN, and any 147-pounder in the world would jump at the chance to square off against a fighter who, against all odds, still wears a cloak of greatness and would guarantee any potential opponent a major payday.

"There are a lot of big names in the division now," said Derrick James, who trains IBF/WBC ruler Errol Spence Jr. "That said, who wouldn't want to fight Pacquiao? Pacquiao *sells*. A lot of guys are good, but they need a great dance partner to sell tickets and pay-per-view buys. A fight of that magnitude is not just for boxing fans. My guy sells tickets, and Pacquiao can sell tickets on the moon. If you ask me, Errol vs. Pacquiao is the biggest fight that can be made at welterweight. Make that fight and you'd be able to put 45,000 or 50,000 people in a football stadium."

Who knows? There might be a young boxing fan, new to the sport, that sometime in the near future will see Manny Pacquiao fight for the first time and get hit by the thunderbolt like I was when I saw him disassemble Ledwaba. There is no time frame that does or should define falling in love at first sight.

Pac Man arrives in style, lighting up Las Vegas with his soon-to-be famous grin following a career-best victory.





The relationship between Hall of Fame trainer Freddie Roach and Pacquiao has lasted almost two decades and produced unrivaled world title glory.

A WILD RIDE »

THE PARTNERSHIP WITH PACQUIAO TURNED TRAINER FREDDIE ROACH INTO A HOUSEHOLD NAME AND PUT THE WILD CARD BOXING CLUB ON THE MAP AS PAC-MANIA SWEPT ACROSS THE WORLD

By **Michael Montero**

When Emmanuel "Manny" Dapidran Pacquiao first met trainer Freddie Roach in 2001, he was unknown by most of the western boxing world. However, it wouldn't take long for Manny to make a big impression on American fans. But even though the Filipino southpaw was having early success, he was doing so as a one-handed fighter. Over the course of the 2000s, Roach would help mold "Pac Man" into a complete boxer. Under his guidance, Pacquiao has built a legacy that rivals the all-time greats, holding legitimate world titles in what is now four different decades.

Freddie still recalls his first meeting with Pacquiao at his gym in Los Angeles, the heralded Wild Card Boxing Club.

"I was doing the mitts in the ring with one of my fighters," he told The Ring. "This guy walks through the door, this small kid with a couple of his managers. I come down and say hi. He asked me if he could do the mitts with me. He says, 'I hear you're pretty good (on the mitts); I'm good, too.' We went into the ring and after the first round, I thought to myself, 'Wow, this kid can fight.' At the same time, Manny says to his manager, 'We have a new trainer.' That was the very beginning of our lifestyle together."

Instantly, Roach knew something was different about this kid. But for all of Pacquiao's obvious strengths, Roach also noticed areas that needed improvement. He was very talented, but he was also very raw. "Manny was really strong with the left hand, but his right wasn't as good. So I immediately started developing the right hand, helping him coordinate it better. I made him use it over and over in training."

The pair clicked right away. And as their chemistry evolved, so too did their confidence in one another. In the summer of 2001, IBF junior featherweight titleholder Lehlo Ledwaba was scheduled to face Enrique Sanchez in his sixth title defense. Sanchez ended up pulling out of the fight, and Pacquiao stepped in on two weeks' notice. He would defy the oddsmakers, dominating and stopping the favored South African in six rounds. That's when Freddie knew that he and Manny were really onto something. Now, it was just a matter of convincing the rest of the boxing world.

"Ledwaba's original opponent had fallen out and Manny was the next highest-rated opponent," said Roach. "Top Rank called and asked if we would take the fight and we agreed to, of course. I knew Ledwaba was a really tough guy, because fighters were avoiding him; they were turning down a chance to win a world title.

(LEFT) STEPHEN DUNN; (RIGHT) JOE KLAMAR

(LEFT) JOHN GURZINSKI; (RIGHT) STEVE MARCUS

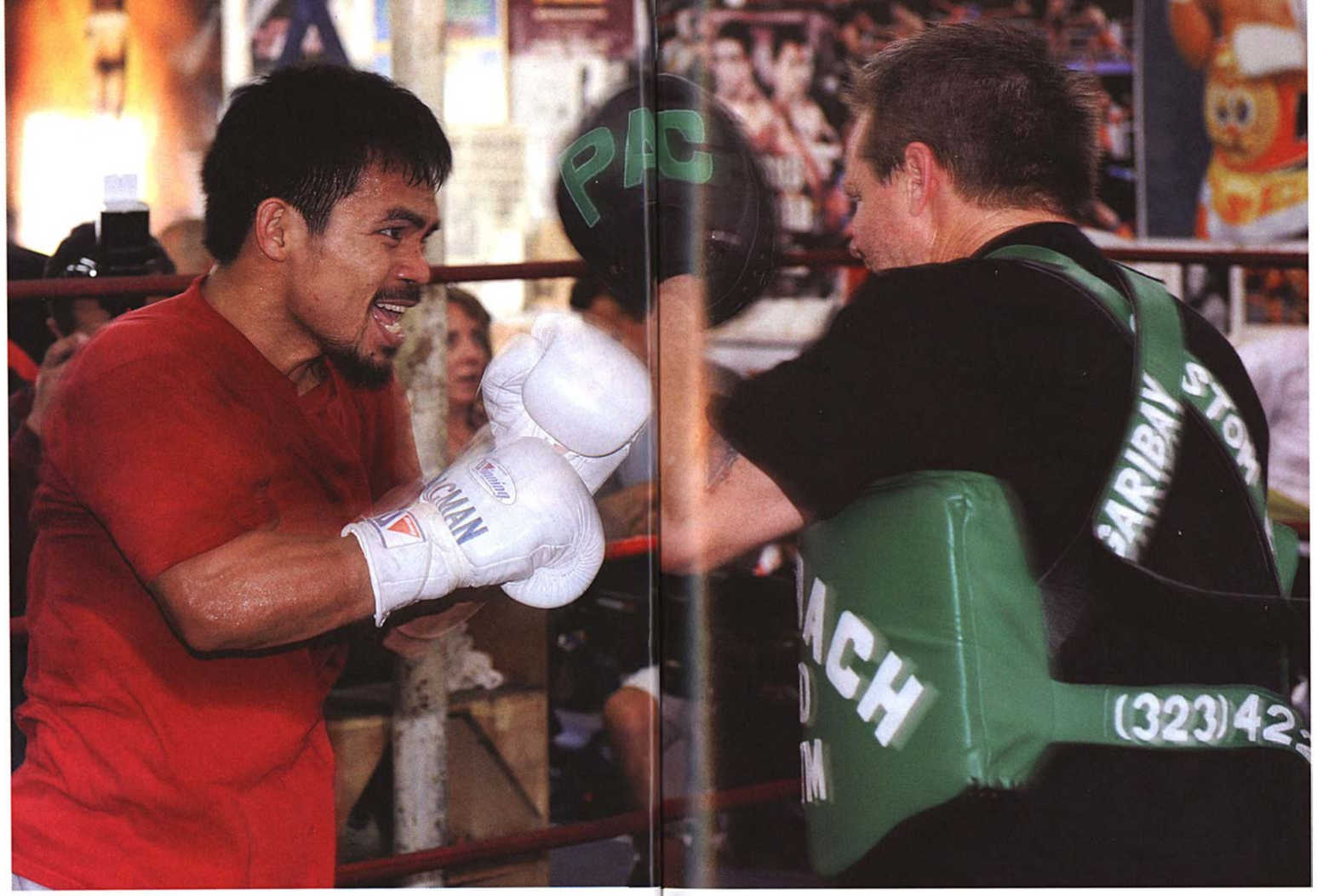
"I talked to (Top Rank matchmaker) Bruce Trampler and asked him, 'Hey, I wonder if I could get a bet in Vegas and make some money on this fight, because Manny is going to destroy him.' Bruce told me, 'Freddie, Lehlo Ledwaba is a killer.' I told him, 'You guys don't realize, Manny is different. He's got *unbelievable* speed and power.' They convinced me not to bet, that Ledwaba was going to knock Manny out, but I told them they were wrong. I remember Manny hit Ledwaba with a left uppercut in the fight that broke his nose, and blood started flowing. From that point on, it was all Manny. After the fight, I was really happy. I didn't get the bet off, but I got the respect of Top Rank's people, and so did Manny."

After the Ledwaba win, Pacquiao had a technical draw against Agapito Sanchez in a foul-filled affair that was stopped after six rounds due to cuts. From there, he reeled off five straight TKO wins, including a statement-making destruction of Marco Antonio Barrera in the featherweight division. "That was Manny's best performance, against Barrera in Texas," Roach said. "People thought that Barrera was the best fighter in the world pound-for-pound at the time, but Manny beat him up and stopped him in the 11th round. For me, Manny's best weight was 126 pounds."

After the Barrera win, Pacquiao was a bona fide boxing star and the Wild Card was now a hot ticket in Los Angeles. ESPN's Steve Kim has been a regular at the gym for 20 years and witnessed the changes firsthand. "When I first started going to the Wild Card, it was just a regular boxing gym," he told The Ring. "Nobody really knew Manny Pacquiao. In fact, I remember being in Las Vegas to cover the Oscar De La Hoya vs. Javier Castillejo fight (June 2001) and Freddie told me, 'Hey Steve, I have that Filipino kid on the undercard.' I didn't even realize that Pacquiao was fighting Ledwaba. I saw Manny that week eating at the MGM Grand buffet with meal tickets just like any other fighter. I think it was just him and (friend turned co-trainer) Buboy Fernandez, no entourage. By the time he beat Barrera a couple years later, that's when things really changed. Suddenly everybody wanted to be at the Wild Card. Some days, it was hard to get a heavy bag in there."

In May 2004, Pacquiao faced Juan Manuel Marquez for the first time. Manny dropped the Mexican three times in the opening round, but Marquez hung tough and battled back. The bout ended in a disputed split draw. Pac Man fans felt he was robbed of a win, as judge Burt Clements incorrectly scored the first round 10-7, rather than 10-6. Had he scored the round correctly, his final scorecard would have been 113-112 for Manny, giving him a split decision win. Nonetheless, Roach knew he had to go back to the drawing board. Pacquiao had been getting by with his blazing speed and explosive power, but it wasn't quite enough against Marquez. To win against the very best in the sport, the pound-for-pound level technicians, Manny was going to have to bring more to the table.

"After dropping Marquez early on, Manny was getting too excited and looking for the knockout too much," Roach said. "After that fight, we started working on his boxing skills and his footwork. I wanted to help make him a better boxer in every direction we could. It was a few small things actually, nothing major. But against fighters the caliber of Marquez, it's the small things that make a big difference."



GABRIEL BOUYS

After a single session on the mitts, Roach knew Pacquiao was for real.

Less than a year after the Marquez bout, Pacquiao faced Erik Morales at junior lightweight. It was a heated battle that produced fireworks, but Manny came up short. A clash of heads in the fifth round opened a bad cut over his right eye, which he claimed negatively affected his performance. All three judges scored it 115-113 for Morales, handing Pacquiao his first loss in six years – and his first with Roach. Once again, the dynamic duo realized they still had work to do in the gym.

"Manny was cut pretty bad in that fight," Roach said. "Cuts are not exactly the best thing in the world for a fighter, with blood going into the eye, making it difficult to see. But we knew Manny's power was always there, so we let him keep going, because one punch could change everything. Still, we needed a little more development for sure. We went back in the gym and focused even more on footwork and taking our time, not diving in, so we could prevent headbutts like that in future fights. Once it clicked with Manny that he didn't have to go looking for the knockout, that he could let it come to him, he became unstoppable."

Kim recalls that era: "There were fans everywhere. They'd show up in the parking lot of the Wild Card and wait for hours just to catch a glimpse of Manny. I remember things got so crazy when he was preparing for the first Morales fight, Freddie had to actually get security and close down the gym when he trained. It got so bad that Freddie ended up buying the laundromat downstairs (the original Wild Card was just the second floor of the building) to separate Manny's camp from the rest of the fighters. When people ask me about the bottom floor of the Wild Card I tell them, 'That's the house that Manny built.' After the De La Hoya fight, it hit an even higher level. For the (Ricky) Hatton camp, they even needed security at the liquor store around the corner. To this day, I've never seen anything like it."

From September 2005 until June 2012, Pacquiao went on a run for the history books. He won 15 in a row (eight by stoppage) before losing to Timothy Bradley in what most of the fight press considered to be one of the worst decisions of the era. Along the way he defeated Morales twice, Barrera once more, De La Hoya, Hatton, Miguel Cotto, Shane Mosley and Marquez twice. The names weren't the only impressive part – Pacquiao had moved all the way up to the welterweight division and was beating, often dominating, naturally larger men.

"In regards to the weight gain, it was a learning process," Roach said. "We had to play with it as we went. For Manny to make the higher weight divisions, obviously we had to get him eating a lot more meals. Our first fight together was at 122 pounds, and he was naturally walking around at 130 during that time. The reason that we moved up in weight, though, is because that's where the money was. Manny is a great puncher with a lot of speed, and even though he's naturally smaller, he's faster and always hit harder than most of the 147-pounders out there. We even went to junior middleweight at one point (against Antonio Margarito) and a lot of people thought we were crazy, but I didn't. I honestly believed Manny could beat anyone in the world at that point."

Pacquiao had gone from living

in a hotel room next door to the Wild Card Boxing Club to being an international icon.

Kim calls those years "Pac-Mania." The fan attention around the Wild Card hit a fever pitch and suddenly it wasn't so easy for media to get access to the Filipino phenom. "Manny turned the Wild Card into a brand," he said. "To this day, I see a lot of boxing tourists, whether it's Brits visiting California from across The Pond or Filipinos driving down from San Francisco, coming in to see the gym. And of course Freddie is nice enough to give them a tour if he's got the time. They come in and take a bunch of photos, spend a bunch of money on Wild Card gear. I used to get access to Manny for an interview whenever; I'd just walk right up to him. But by the time of Pac-Mania, I had to go through his public relations firm. It had all become very different."

Manny wasn't the only one who was a star. Roach reaped rewards from the pairing as well. "When the Pac Express started to roll, Freddie became the most in-demand trainer in the world," Kim said. "Freddie had a good career before Manny. He worked with Stevie Collins, James Toney, Virgil Hill and Michael Moorer. But I don't think he gets the gigs with Oscar (De La Hoya), Cotto and others without the Pacquiao legacy. Every great trainer has that signature fighter, and for him, it was Manny." Roach was in demand outside of the gym as well. Creative Artists Agency, a talent firm that represents some of the biggest names in Hollywood, signed Roach for speaking engagements and TV appearances.

Through it all, Freddie managed to keep it mostly about boxing. That was not the case with Pacquiao, however. He was increasingly splitting time at the gym with acting, singing, talk show appearances

Pacquiao poses with former NBA player Jalen Rose at the Wild Card Boxing Club.

and more. After a failed attempt to run for office in the Philippines in 2007, he was elected to the House of Representatives in 2010, representing the province of Sarangani. All of these distractions concerned Roach. He wondered if Manny was losing focus. It would all culminate in one of the most shocking knockouts of the era.

In December of 2012 inside the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, Pacquiao would face his old nemesis, Juan Manuel Marquez, for the fourth time. After hurting Marquez in the fifth round and having his way for much of the sixth, Manny walked into a beautiful straight-right counter and fell face-first into the canvas, creating one of the more dramatic scenes in recent boxing history.

"Marquez was a very, very clever boxer," Roach said. "He was a tough style for us. Putting him and Manny together always meant a dangerous fight for both of them. We would work on different things for each of the four bouts with Marquez. Whether it was focusing on boxing, creating angles, or not dropping his hands when he was in range. During one of the Marquez fights I yelled at him for staying on the ropes too much. He told me, 'Freddie, I just wanted to see how hard he could hit. I can take his punches. It's OK.' Manny always wants to challenge himself like that. In that fourth fight, he just got caught."

Many boxing pundits wrote the obituary for Pacquiao's career on that night. There was no way he could rebound from such a shocking loss, they said. There was no way he could keep boxing and serving in government at the same time. But Manny ignored the naysayers and kept moving forward. He was reelected to congress in 2013 and continued to campaign in the welterweight division, scoring three straight wins before signing on to face Floyd Mayweather Jr. in May 2015. It was dubbed the "Fight of the Century," but unfortunately, after an unprecedented amount of hype that transcended boxing and broke through to the mainstream, it played out as the dud of the century. Pacquiao lost by competitive, albeit decisive, unanimous decision against the premier welterweight of the generation. Roach, however, maintains that the fight was closer than the judges and commentators saw it.

"Mayweather is a great fighter, but Manny went into that fight with a bad shoulder," he said. "After the fourth round, Manny said to me, 'Freddie, my shoulder is shot, I can't use it.' I asked him if I should stop the fight and he said, 'No, I'm going to finish the fight with one hand.' We did well in the fight; it was close. If you watch that fight and turn the commentary down, that's a very close fight. But Mayweather was very fast like Manny was, and he was a clever boxer."

Kim saw red flags before the bout that Pacquiao wasn't 100 percent. "The only time I didn't get to see Manny train was the Mayweather camp," he said. "They closed off the downstairs and didn't let us (the media) in. I remember noticing that his sparring partners weren't going downstairs either, they were upstairs training with us. That's when the rumors of the shoulder injury started flying."

Once again, many analysts and fans wrote Manny's obituary, yet he fought on. Pacquiao was elected as a senator in 2016, earning more than 16 million votes. The following year he lost an almost unanimously disputed decision to Jeff Horn in his native Australia. More obituaries were written, yet he fought on.

Fast-forward to 2020 and Manny Pacquiao currently owns the WBA welterweight world title. The tales of his demise were greatly exaggerated. Although he's suffered a few losses, some disputed and some not, his overall body of work in the 2010s was quite impressive. Among his accomplishments over that span were two wins over Bradley. Last year, he dominated Adrien Broner and took Keith Thurman's "0" at 40 years old. Roach attributes Manny's longevity to maturity, willingness to learn and a ferocious work ethic.

"Look at the Bradley fights and look at the changes," said Roach. "In the first bout with Bradley, Manny was just going out there looking to land one big shot. But Manny threw less punches in the second and third Bradley fights; that was part of the strategy. When Manny would trade with him, he was in range and available to be countered. His defense had a huge improvement over the course of the Bradley fights. He's slowed down and learned to pick his spots more. Manny has become a very good boxer.

"He's more mature today, of course. And he knows boxing now as well as anybody. I can't really teach Manny much at this stage of his career. We've both gone through everything and learned together. It's been great for both of us. There is nothing really different about the way he prepares today. I still see the old Manny when he trains, trying to break the heavy bag and break my hands on the mitts. Manny has always had a great work ethic, and that's why he can still compete at a high level in his forties."

Kim echoes Roach's sentiments: "I've never seen a fighter at his level train with that type of tempo and energy for two, three hours consistently. I saw the same energy for the Thurman fight that I saw a decade ago. I've always marveled at Manny's ability to take joy in his training. It's not work to him."

"I always tell people, 'Work hard and good things happen,'" said Roach. "Manny Pacquiao is my proof."

Michael Montero can be found on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram via @MonteroOnBoxing. His weekly podcast 'The Neutral Corner' can be seen live every Monday on The Ring's YouTube channel and heard on iTunes, PodBean, Spotify, iHeartRadio and elsewhere.

GABRIEL BOUYS

MANNY AND THE MEXICANS:

THE BEST OF FRENEMIES

PACQUIAO'S NINE-YEAR SERIES WITH A TRIO OF MEXICAN STARS PRODUCED SOME OF THE GREATEST (AND UNQUESTIONABLY THE WORST) MOMENTS OF HIS CAREER

By **Nigel Collins**

The last stop on the Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez 3 media tour was Mexico City, "Dinamita's" hometown, where an estimated 20,000 people turned up at the Monumento a la Revolución to greet them. That's a mighty big turnout, even for a boxing-crazy nation. As counterintuitive as it seems, their numbers were swelled considerably by those who came to see Pacquiao. »

Triumphs against Erik Morales (top), Marco Antonio Bárrera (middle) and Juan Manuel Marquez (bottom) saw Pacquiao achieve true greatness.

(TOP TO BOTTOM) DONALD MIRALLE; ETHAN MILLER; AL BELLO

Morales struggled with the persistent body attack of Pacquiao.

There was even a blowup of a sepia-tone photo from the Revolution, featuring a group of freedom fighters sitting on a locomotive, a Pacquiao-lookalike among them.

The crowd chanted "Manny, Manny" as he laughed and waved. Scenes of mass adulation were a fairly common occurrence in the Philippines. But this was Mexico! What must Marquez have been thinking?

"Manny Pacquiao is an idol in Mexico," said Diego Martinez, longtime sportswriter for Reforma. "They came because they wanted to see him. Even when he's not against a Mexican, there's still a lot of interest in Pacquiao's fights."

Perhaps the machismo ethos embraced by both cultures is at its root. Mexicans and Filipinos are certainly simpatico when it comes to the style of boxing they enjoy the most. Make a competitive match between a Mexican and a Filipino and you're pretty much guaranteed a real fight. Rather than hate Manny for beating their countrymen, Mexicans admire his fighting spirit and aggressive style.

Pacquiao's legacy is forever entwined with Mexico and its fighters. All told, to date, he's fought nine different Mexicans over 15 bouts, but he will always be most closely associated with Erik Morales, Marco Antonio Barrera and Marquez.

Pacquiao's series of nine fights with the elite trio, which began in November 2003 and concluded in December 2012, was a voyage of growth and glory, spiced by the sting of defeat. Like archeologists sifting through the sands of time in search of knowledge, tracking Pacquiao's fights against the threesome is a window into his transformation from raw slugger to crafty elder statesman with mayhem in his heart.

It all started with Ring featherweight champion Barrera, the man who hung the first and only loss on "Prince" Naseem Hamed. He was popular on both sides of the border and ranked third in The Ring's pound-for-pound ratings going into the Pacquiao fight, held November 15, 2003, at San Antonio's Alamodome.

It was one-sided from the start and became more so as the fight progressed. It must have been difficult for the pro-Barrera crowd of 10,127 to come to grips with the fact that a kid with an impish grin and wisp of a mustache was kicking Barrera's ass.

Their man had been ambushed, fair and square of course, but ambushed nonetheless. Barrera didn't fully understand what he had in front of him until it was too late. Like the hot rod flames on his red trunks, Pac Man was on fire, his raw ferocity overwhelming.

Barrera was knocked down in the third and 11th rounds and was helpless on the ropes when one of his handlers climbed onto the ring apron and told the ref, Laurence Cole, to stop it, which he did with four seconds left in the penultimate round.

"Ninety-five percent of the audience at the Alamodome was Mexican. Nobody knew Manny Pacquiao," said Martinez. "I think that was a fight that changed boxing and made Pacquiao a legend."

It was a sunny Saturday afternoon in March 2004 and Pacquiao was supposed to be at the Wild Card Gym. Not the one in Hollywood, but its namesake in Sucat, Metro Manila, a state-of-the-art facility owned by Pacquiao's then-business manager, Rod Nazario.

Manny, who was ostensibly training for his upcoming bout with Juan Manuel Marquez, scheduled for May 8 at the MGM Grand, never showed. He was in Davao City, more than 600 miles away, doing his thing.

"I called him on his cell phone, and I could hear the pool balls clicking in the background," said Ronnie Nathanielsz, who was among the journalists waiting for Pacquiao.

In his next column, Nathanielsz accused the national hero of "spending long hours and late nights [playing pool] instead of training."

ETHAN MILLER

Barrera enjoyed little success against Pacquiao in their two fights.

Pacquiao was still basking in the splendor of annihilating Barrera the previous November, living life to the max and partying just as exuberantly as he fought. When he finally arrived in Manila the next morning, newspaper headlines echoed Nathanielsz: Get serious. Marquez is no joke.

If Pacquiao skipped a few gym sessions, it never showed. The first round was the worst three minutes of Marquez's career and, oddly enough, contained one of his finest moments.

For close to three minutes, Pacquiao was Chief Lapu-Lapu at the Battle of Mactan, but instead of driving a bamboo spear into Magellan, he floored Marquez three times with his bullet-train left.

Unlike Magellan, Marquez got up three times; not anywhere near as fast as he went down, but get up he did, and that was all that mattered. It foreshadowed the difficulty Pacquiao would have the remainder of the fight and in their subsequent bouts.

After 12 scintillating rounds, the fight could have gone either way, and when a split draw was announced, it seemed fair enough. But a slip of the pencil cost Pacquiao the fight.

It was later revealed that unlike the other two judges, Burt Clements scored the first round 10-7 in favor of Pacquiao instead of 10-6. Had Clements got it right, Manny would have won a split decision.

In a typical example of bureaucratic double-talk, the Nevada commission said Clements made a mistake but the draw verdict would stand. The truth is that sportsbooks had already made it official.

Following a TKO victory over Narongrit Pirang (aka Fahsan 3K Battery) in the Philippines, Pacquiao relinquished the featherweight belt and made his junior lightweight debut against Morales at the MGM Grand on March 19, 2005.

Pac Man and "El Terrible" would fight three times in 20 months. It was a significant period in Manny's development as a fighter and gate attraction, sort of a crash course in

Marquez provided Pacquiao with some of his toughest moments in a four-fight series.

the realities of life at the top in the USA. He was good, real good, but had to get better.

We didn't realize it at the time, but the first Pacquiao bout was Morales' last great performance. He was on the back stretch of a long and distinguished career but still a formidable fighter, a tough guy from Tijuana's notorious Zona Norte who could box as well as slug and never backed down.

An accidental clash of heads in the fifth round opened a crater-like gash over Manny's right eye. It certainly didn't help his cause, but terrific back-and-forth action continued unabated nonetheless. They were still going at it in the final round, beating the hell out of one another, and you got the impression they would've just kept going until they collapsed if the final bell hadn't stopped them.

It was close, but on the whole, Morales had an edge. All three judges scored the fight 115-113 in favor of Morales. There were no complaints from Pacquiao's camp, just a request for a rematch. And they got it.

Between the first and the second Morales fights, Manny and trainer Freddie Roach worked overtime to find a way to turn his right hand into a significant weapon. He'd been in love with his concussive left for so long that his right had become almost an afterthought.

Manny has always been a quick learner, and the right to the body landed with authority in the Morales rematch on January 21, 2006, at the Thomas & Mack Center. It was instrumental in slowing Morales to a virtual standstill. Fatigue and despair were etched on Morales' face as he rose from his stool at the start of the 10th round. He was done and he knew it. Two knockdowns later, it was over at the 2:33 mark.

Nobody was calling Pacquiao a one-handed fighter anymore.

There was no reason for a third Morales fight except a monetary one. The fans couldn't get enough of the pairing, and if they wanted a rubber match, Top Rank and HBO were happy to give it to them. A tremendous crowd of 18,276 showed up at the Thomas & Mack Center to watch Pacquiao demolish what was left of Morales.

Morales was knocked down in the second round and twice more in the third. After being floored for the third time, he just sat there with a bemused look on his face, either unable or unwilling to get up. He'd had enough of Pacquiao to last a lifetime. Referee Vic Drakulich counted Morales out with three seconds remaining in the third round.

The combined attendance for the three Pacquiao-Morales fights was 47,517, and the pay-per-view revenue $49.5 million. Pac Man wasn't there yet, but he was on his way to the magical realm of eight-figure paydays, and the lessons learned during the Mexican cycle helped get him there.

Following his devastating loss to Pacquiao, Barrera won six of seven bouts against quality opposition. Fans expected the rematch (October

6, 2007) at Mandalay Bay, to be a rousing affair but had to settle for a tactical match. Barrera's reluctance to go toe-to-toe was matched by Pacquiao's hesitancy to launch his usual all-out assault.

"Manny boxed well and showed good footwork, which is what we worked on during training," said Roach after the fight. "Manny was fighting a smarter fight tonight. Speed and power is not enough to stay in the game long enough. He's bringing more to the table than being ferocious."

It wasn't a stinker, but it was far from memorable. And you've got to remember ferocity was what Pacquiao was selling. The only real excitement came in the 11th round when Manny connected with a right to the face and then delivered a left that staggered Barrera and buckled his knees. But the moment passed and Pacquiao settled for a unanimous 12-round decision.

Manny talked about moving up in weight, but before he did, a lucrative offer for a second Marquez fight at 130 pounds was too good to turn down.

Four years had gone by since their first fight, a lifetime for some boxers, but Marquez and Pacquiao had been competing at an elite level since their original meeting and much was expected when they fought on March 15, 2008, at Mandalay Bay.

Manny and Juan Manuel delivered the goods, trading flurry after flurry, fighting tit-for-tat for 12 riveting rounds. The difference was the knockdown Pacquiao scored late in the third round. When a fight is super close, a knockdown looms large.

Pacquiao won a split decision, but nothing had been settled, not really, not yet.

The time between the second and third Pacquiao-Marquez bouts was arguably Pacquiao's finest. He stopped an outclassed David Diaz to win the WBC lightweight title and then reeled off three of the most spectacular performances of his career, stopping Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton and Miguel Cotto. Then came wide unanimous decisions over Joshua Clottey, Antonio Margarito and Shane Mosley.

Although Pacquiao shredded Margarito's face in a bloodbath that should have been stopped, he seemed comfortable coasting to no-sweat decisions over Clottey and Mosley. Pundits debated whether Pacquiao had grown complacent or was on the decline. Maybe he was just mailing it in because he could. After all, his schedule hadn't included many gimmes.

The third Pacquiao-Marquez match, November 12, 2011, at the MGM Grand, was similar to the second. It was close but even more controversial. Marquez outboxed Pacquiao in many rounds but failed to press his advantage, allowing Pacquiao to rally late.

When Pacquiao was declared winner via majority decision, Marquez fans expressed their displeasure by throwing debris and beer cans. Six months later, on December 8, 2012, they would be dancing for joy at the same venue.

The instant the punch landed, Pacquiao was out on his feet. No longer in control of his body, he pitched forward like a drunk who'd tripped over a curb and landed on his face, his hands and arms pinned beneath his body.

"He's not getting up! He's not getting up!" screamed HBO's Roy Jones.

Referee Kenny Bayless dispensed with the count and waved the fight over one second before the end of the sixth round. Pacquiao looked more like a battlefield casualty than a knockout victim.

The emotional eruption inside the MGM Grand Garden Arena approached pandemonium levels. Fear, anger and elation swirled like dust devils. While Manny's wife, Jinkee, was having a meltdown, Marquez climbed the corner ropes, both arms raised in victory, a roar of approval washing over him. The counter right Manny ran into was a beaut.

Pacquiao's darkest moment was Marquez's greatest triumph, a resounding end to a rivalry that began eight years prior. It also ended Pac Man's series of fights with the big three. Marquez, Barrera and Morales are retired and have all been inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. That says a lot about them and the man who fought them all.

The secret of Pacquiao's success has always been hidden in plain sight: He has the guts to go for broke and has lived the credo like few others. It first surfaced when the teenage Pacquiao left his family and stowed away on a ship that would take him from Mindanao, the island of his birth, to Luzon and the teeming metropolis of Manila.

Pacquiao never wavered, just plunged headlong into damn near everything he tried, from hustling cigarettes and donuts on the street to being elected to the Philippine Senate. Emmanuel Dapidran Pacquiao has never been just another boxer.

He has been fighting professionally for a quarter century, and like almost all fighters who manage to stay on top for such a long time, he's adapted. Gone forever is the insanely quick, extremely vicious skinny kid with a hand grenade in his left glove.

There are still glimpses of the happy warrior that beguiled us from the start, but Pacquiao goes for broke in a different way these days. He has a tighter rein on his reckless impulses but can still strike at any moment. Although they have become rare, Manny still comes to knock out the other guy. He still loves to fight.

We saw that when he beat young buck Keith Thurman in July 2019. A lot of people called it an upset, but was it?

Back when Thurman was fighting four-rounders, Pacquiao was going to war with Mexico's finest. They helped define who he was and what he could do – the kind of fighter who can shrug off defeat, such as the knockout loss to Marquez, and keep going for broke. That's a real fighter for you.

Today, he's the last man standing.

A MAN POSSESSED

MANNY PACQUIAO HAS FACED A HOST OF GREAT FIGHTERS, BUT HE MET HIS TRUE NEMESIS IN **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**

By **Tom Gray**

It was a killer blow, and Manny Pacquiao was out upon impact.

The glitzy ringsiders, who cringed at the brutality of the punch, knew it was over. The HBO commentary team knew it was over. A disconsolate Team Pacquiao knew it was over. However, the man who delivered the Ring Knockout of the Year for 2012, Juan Manuel Marquez, remained composed. After landing that short but incredibly explosive right-hand counter – a near-perfect punch – the Mexican star moved sharply around his foe's unconscious frame, shuffled backward toward a neutral corner and placed his gloves on his hips. All the while, Marquez refused to take his eyes off of Pacquiao, who was face-down and still. Why? Firstly, Marquez was a staunch professional, but more importantly, he wanted to make sure that his tormentor was finished. He wanted to see that with his own eyes.

In the modern era, the Pacquiao-Marquez rivalry mimicked Captain Ahab's pursuit of the white whale. The pair first met in May 2004, and while Pacquiao didn't bite off a portion of Marquez's leg – Ahab's fate in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* – he did drop him three times in the opening round, bursting his nose across his face in the process. Marquez survived the attack and remarkably battled back to earn himself a draw, but he'd been humiliated in those opening three minutes and adopted the role of avenger from that point on. It would take four fights over eight years – and three near-misses – before Marquez landed the terminal harpoon.

When referee Kenny Bayless inspected Pacquiao and waved his right hand to signal the end of fight four, the sold-out crowd at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas erupted in a deafening frenzy. The Filipino contingent was obviously devastated, whereas the Mexican faithful celebrated with the same passion that they had displayed when the legendary Julio Cesar Chavez came from behind to stop Meldrick Taylor with two seconds left in March 1990. The release Marquez felt was indescribable.

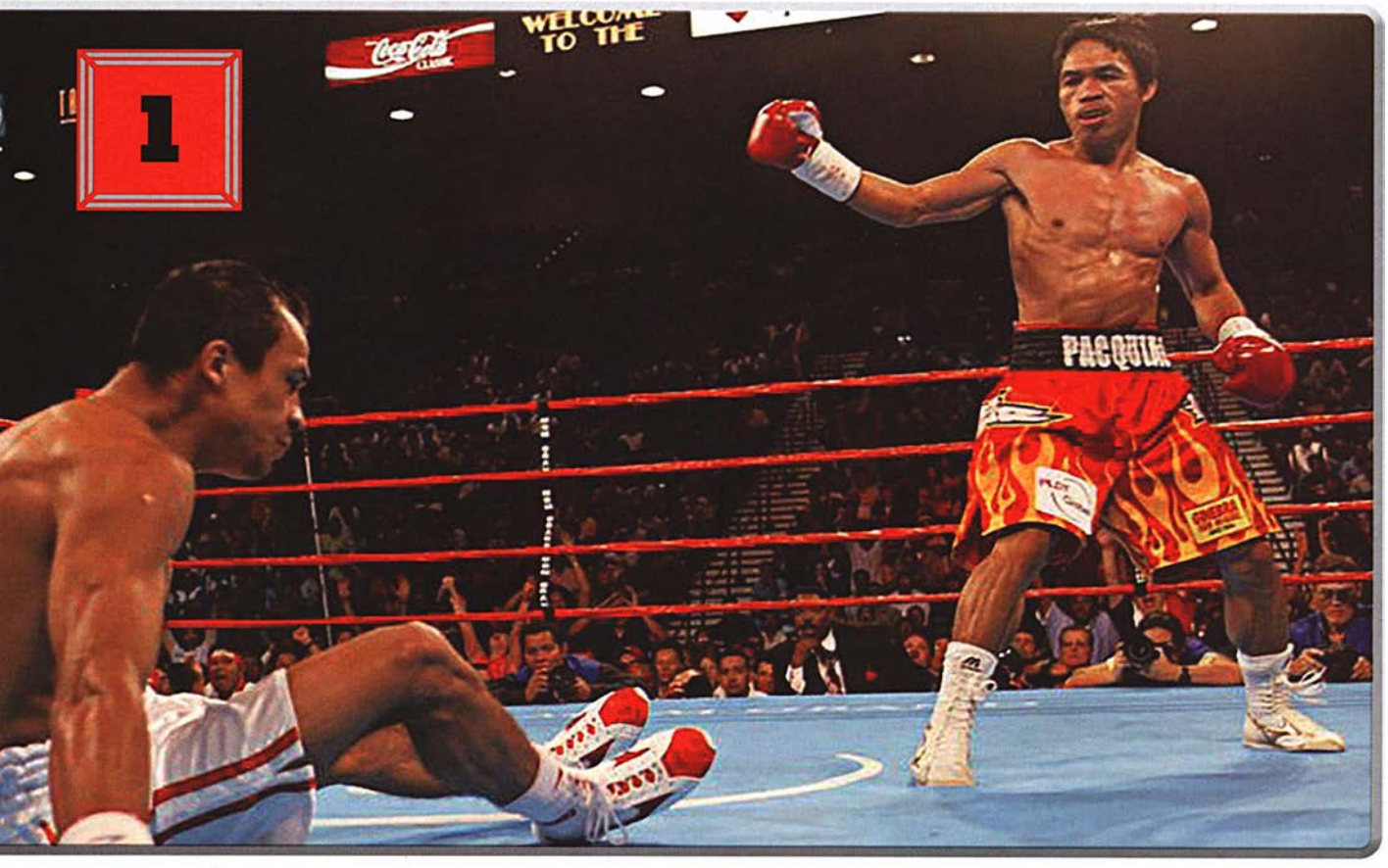
Officially, Pacquiao led the series 2-1-1, but "Dinamita" had made his statement in unbelievable fashion and was more than content with the final chapter.

"I was never tempted to have a fifth fight," Marquez told The Ring sternly. "The Filipino people wanted a fifth fight, Pacquiao wanted a fifth fight, but why? I could never equal what I did in our last fight.

"After the fourth Pacquiao fight, I fought Tim Bradley (a 12-round split decision loss), then I had my last fight (a 12-round unanimous decision win over Mike Alvarado in May 2014). I tried to come back in 2016, but my body couldn't do the training. My knee was injured and my shoulder was injured. I decided not to come back, and I had nothing to prove."

He certainly didn't. Marquez (56-7-1, 40 knockouts) won titles in four weight classes and is one of the most decorated fighters in Mexican boxing history. He should have entered the International Boxing Hall of Fame this year alongside fellow legends Bernard Hopkins and Sugar Shane Mosley, but COVID-19 dictated that he will now be part of a huge double induction in 2021. Patience, however, is a virtue, and Marquez emphatically proved that in one of the most electrifying rivalries the sport has ever seen.

The great former champion spoke to The Ring about his four-fight series with Pacquiao:



NUMERO UNO

May 8, 2004 / MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: Ring Magazine, IBF and WBA featherweight

"Manny Pacquiao is a special champion. He has speed, he has power, and he's still a great fighter right now. I never could have imagined a boxer like Pacquiao, but at that time the people didn't really know him. Most fans picked Marco Antonio Barrera [to beat Pacquiao in the first fight] and he gave the fans a big surprise. It just took that one fight and Pacquiao was known very fast. After he beat Barrera, my promoter offered me the fight, and I said, 'Don't worry, I can do it. I can beat Pacquiao!' I had no idea the fight would go the way it did. In the first round, I was down three times and I couldn't believe what was happening. I never expected any fighter to put me on the floor three times. But I had prepared myself mentally and physically for this fight. I was defending two world titles and I didn't want to surrender them easily. I have sacrificed so much, and I didn't want to lose in one round. I had to make an adjustment, so (trainer) Nacho Beristain told me to look out for the left hand because Pacquiao has power and speed in this punch. I changed during the fight, moved my body, started landing combinations, and I kept Pacquiao at a distance. The first round was a big surprise for me, but I outboxed Pacquiao and it came out a draw. It was close, but I thought I won the fight. Pacquiao won the first round 10-6 with the knockdowns, but I believe that I won nine or 10 rounds of this fight."

RESULT: DRAW

NUMERO DOS

March 15, 2008 / Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas • Titles: Ring Magazine and WBC junior lightweight

"I wanted to prove that I won the first fight, and again I prepared hard. Our first fight was close, both of us were better fighters now, so I knew the second fight was going to be difficult for me. But even then I felt like I had to knock Pacquiao out – 'if I want to win the rematch, I must win by knockout.' Like the first fight, I had to match his speed, land the cleaner punches and keep him at a distance. Pacquiao is obviously a southpaw, so the feet are very important. I would keep my left foot outside his right foot because I need to win the position [to take away Pacquiao's right jab, right hook and left hand]. This is very important when fighting a southpaw, and that gives me the advantage. Also, when you know a fighter, you need to work on his game. What techniques are going to work better for me? I trained hard with Nacho Beristain and we were ready. I gave Pacquiao a lot of trouble in the second fight, and I won maybe eight rounds. I was landing with power and he was feeling the punches. I did the best I could, but the judges said that the (third-round) knockdown (by Pacquiao) was the difference, and that's why he won this fight. But if you look at the landed punches, the person landing the power punches, I feel I had the bigger percentage. I don't know what happened with the judges. Again, it was close, but I did what was necessary to win the second fight."

RESULT: PACQUIAO SD 12

NUMERO TRES

November 11, 2011 / MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: WBO welterweight

"Let me tell you something: Pacquiao gave me this rematch because he felt that he lost the second fight, and a lot of fans felt the same. The difference in this fight was that we were both heavier (the bout was made at a catchweight of 144 pounds), so I needed to change my conditioning. Pacquiao was bigger, but I was bigger too, and I trained very hard to make myself like a new fighter. I changed my physical preparation, and I was the best in the ring that night. The game plan was the same: Use speed, match the moves of Pacquiao and don't fight at close distance. Defensively, I moved my upper body and I needed to use the counterpunches. I believe that I won this fight clearly, and I should have won by maybe four rounds. Again, I don't know what happened when the judges gave a majority decision to Pacquiao. It was hurting my career, because I wanted to be the best fighter in the world, pound-for-pound. And when the fight finished, (promoter) Bob Arum told me, 'This is a business. You'll have the rematch. I don't know when, but you'll have the rematch.' I felt very angry at this time; that comment made me very angry. The fans in Mexico were also angry because they believe this [result] was a robbery. I arrived back in Mexico at the airport, and everyone was talking about it. You can't imagine the reaction in Mexico after that third fight. I was very disappointed, but the Mexican people supported me."

RESULT: PACQUIAO MD 12

NUMERO CUATRO

December 12, 2012 / MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: WBO welterweight

"Pacquiao knew that he lost the third fight. He knew that he'd never beat me and he wanted to knock me out this time. I prepared for the same fight: Match Pacquiao's movement and speed. But this time I wanted to punch with more force. I can't win a decision; I need the knockout or I can't win. This, to me, is our best fight. I knocked him down in the third round, but he got up and came back at me. The mistake [Pacquiao made] was that he would feint and attack. He would feint, come fast and throw punches. He would do that all the time. In Round 6, this time, I saw him coming and was able to land a very hard punch. Some people call it a lucky punch, but there's video (available on YouTube) where I land the same right hand on a sparring partner [and knock him down] in training camp for this fight. I stepped back and used that punch on Pacquiao. I was one of the best counterpunchers. I knew he was knocked out when he went down. It was unbelievable! Winning this fight was like winning the first fight, the second fight, the third fight ... all the fights. It meant everything to me. I did it for my country – the Mexican people. You can't imagine the reaction when I won this fight, not just in Mexico City but all over Mexico. This knockout made up for the close decisions that went against us. I would like to thank the Mexican people who supported me for my fights against Manny Pacquiao and all through my career." RING

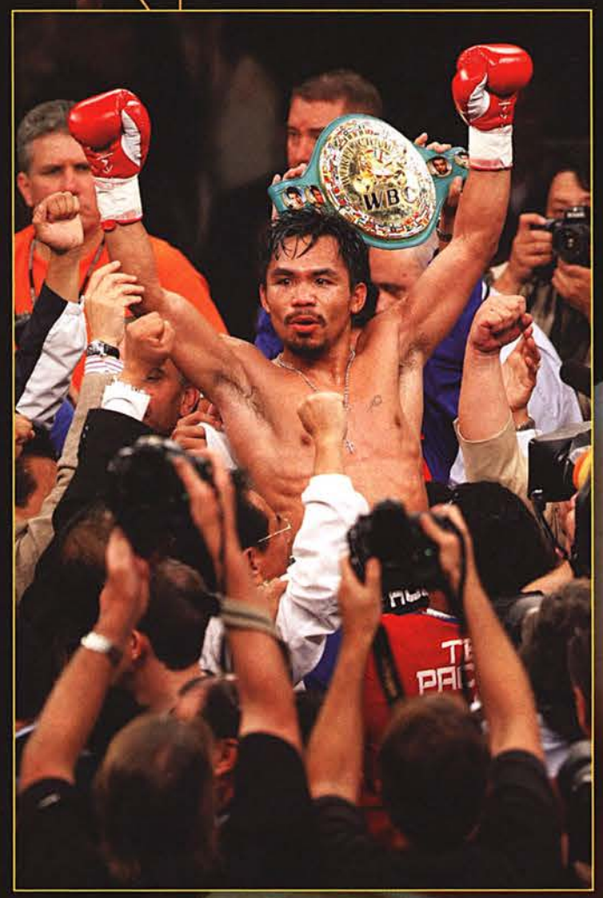
RESULT: MARQUEZ KO 6

Alfonso Nava helped to coordinate this interview. The Ring would like to thank him for his assistance.

Tom Gray is Executive Editor for The Ring Magazine. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

AL BELLO

THE SUPERSTAR



MANNY PACQUIAO WAS ALREADY A BOXING PHENOM WHEN HE ENTERED THE MOST DOMINATING AND GLORIOUS PERIOD OF HIS CAREER, AND HE EMERGED FROM IT AS A LEGEND

By **Gareth A Davies**

There was a time in the career of Manny Pacquiao when he could do no wrong: so popular in the Philippines that when he stepped into the ring, the army and rebel guerrillas called a truce. There was a time when Pac Man had set out his stall, far from boxing, to become a poverty-fighting politician. Boxing led him there.

There was a time when Pacquiao was considered by many to be the world's best pound-for-pound boxer, who was being avoided by Floyd Mayweather. This was that time in Pacquiao's pomp when he was humble yet destructive in a run of fights that saw him at his peak demolishing

Pacquiao was a pound-for-pound entrant when he faced Oscar De La Hoya in 2008, but a brutal display of speed and accuracy saw him reach the top.

JED JACOBSOHN

ETHAN MILLER

Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton and Miguel Cotto in the space of 11 months from December 2008 to November 2009. It transformed Pac Man into one of the greatest fighters we have ever seen.

Let us just pause for a moment and consider how Pacquiao had reached that point: He had already gone 2-1 up in a trilogy with Erik Morales, was 2-0 over Marco Antonio Barrera, one victory and a draw against Juan Manuel Marquez, and prior to the triumph over De La Hoya had dropped and stopped David Diaz, who was 34-1-1 at the time.

For that matter, in the triumvirate of contests in question, De La Hoya was 39-5, Hatton 45-1 and Cotto 34-1 when they faced the Filipino with the flashing fists who held a nation in his hands.

At the time, Pacquiao also had the world at his feet. He was beloved at home, the darling of the media in the U.S., and he was training at the Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood under Freddie Roach. The axis of his life was beautifully balanced. To his compatriots, he had become the Philippines' most famous and successful export, its most renowned star, and a symbol of triumph over adversity. When he traveled home after victories, the Filipino who had grown up in a shanty town having run away to Manila as a teenager, boxing for $2, which he sent home to his mother, was treated as a returning king.

Moreover, here was a man who looked and acted as if he was never under pressure, who was the embodiment of living the American dream. Pacquiao had made the U.S. his own land of opportunity. De La Hoya, Hatton and Cotto were three opportunities that would put him on a pedestal in three countries entranced with boxing and earn him a treasure trove of rewards inside and outside the ring. These three fights saw the rise of Pacquiao to superstar status, not just for the victories, but for the manner in which he earned them.

The hero returns to his homeland following a dominant eighth-round stoppage over De La Hoya in December 2008.

The buildup to the De La Hoya fight was mean, moody and magnificent. From the outside, De La Hoya was at least two weight divisions above Pacquiao. He had defeated 19 incumbent or former titleholders and had won 10 titles of his own in six different weight classes. On paper, De La Hoya had huge height, reach and weight advantages. It was labeled "a circus." It was seen as a mismatch, a step too far for Pac Man.

Even government officials in his homeland urged Pacquiao not to fight De La Hoya. One Filipino congressman, Rufus Rodriguez, asked the government to temporarily revoke Pacquiao's license to stop him from entering into a dangerous assignment. "Manny is a national treasure," said Rodriguez. "If something bad happens to him in that fight, the government and the Games and Amusement Board (GAB) would be blamed. GAB should stop the fight."

But Pacquiao, who had started his career weighing 106 pounds but would face De La Hoya at 147 pounds, laughed it off. Contractually, "The Golden Boy," then 35 years old, was going to have to come down to welterweight – a weight he had not fought at for almost eight years. And yet the news spin, which sent tremors through the political sphere in the Philippines, was that their guy was fighting a monster, that it would be David vs. Goliath.

When they hit the scales, De La Hoya weighed 145 pounds, Pacquiao 142 pounds. But Pacquiao's fast, crab-like movements and pugnacity bewildered De La Hoya from the moment the first bell tolled, and De La Hoya got a shellacking. Pacquiao beat De La Hoya to the punch time and again in the early rounds, his footwork spectacular and his fists on fire, De La Hoya only momentarily showing a semblance of his old ways in the fifth round. In the sixth and seventh Pacquiao mercilessly pounded his foe, and after round eight, submission came as De La Hoya's corner stopped the fight. Pacquiao had dismantled America's most popular boxer, and he was now rated by The Ring Magazine as the world's No. 1 boxer. The fight generated 1.25 million pay-per-view buys and $70 million in pay-per-view revenue.

It was the fourth time in boxing pay-per-view history that a non-heavyweight event had attained the one million buy mark. De La Hoya announced his retirement after this bout and declared his attention would only be on promoting.

We learned – once again – never to say never in boxing. Having clinically dismantled De La Hoya in those eight one-sided rounds in Las Vegas, Pacquiao immediately called out Ricky Hatton, who was working ringside as a commentator for Sky Box Office, as his next rival. "I can fight anytime, anywhere, no problem," Pacquiao said.

Hatton obliged. A superfight at junior welterweight (140 pounds) was booked for the MGM Grand in 2009.

Pacquiao was now approaching his full glory. A month before the Pacquiao-Hatton fight, I visited Hatton in Las Vegas before circling back to Los Angeles to see Pac Man in camp. Hatton was somber and halfway through a long camp in Nevada. He talked up the fight and his sparring, but there was a lack of buzz around him.

Arriving in L.A., there was no greater contrast. There he was, in a corner of the Wild Card, that compact man with a tiny waist, powerful arms and muscular calves. He was in prayer at the edge of the sparring ring. Pacquiao, the devout Christian, the Filipino idol, the street urchin turned benefactor and, at 5-foot-6 in his socks, the best pound-for-pound boxer on the planet. An entourage of 30 Filipinos collapsed in laughter at his every utterance.

The Wild Card, located between Santa Monica and Sunset boulevards a few blocks from the center of Hollywood, was a dream factory for fighters and had become Pacquiao's home away from home. For weeks, the Wild Card reverberated to the beat of a speedbag at the end of Pacquiao's blurred fists. It was a month before the fight, and more than 500 Filipinos had gathered in an orderly queue around the gym's perimeter fence and parking lot to shake hands, ask for an autograph or simply touch the arm of the man who has had the official titles "National Treasure" and "National Fist" bestowed upon him by the government of the Philippines. Pacquiao and Roach had been together for eight years at that point. In the ring, even in training, there was a relentlessness and intensity that was simply mesmerizing. In 14 years as a professional, Pacquiao had won titles in five weight divisions – flyweight, junior featherweight, featherweight, junior lightweight and lightweight. Bob Arum, the veteran

JAY DIRECTO

Las Vegas-based promoter who oversaw Muhammad Ali's career in the 1960s and '70s, dropped by. He compared Pacquiao to Ali for me. "Muhammad was larger than life and loved by people, but I have never had a fighter who has so captivated one people as Manny," Arum explained. "Everywhere I go, I am approached by Filipinos." Such was Pacquiao's standing in his home country that it is written into Philippine law that the army would go to Pacquiao's aid if his family is in danger. The previous year, he had carried the flag for The Philippines at the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, and he is the first Filipino boxer to have his image appear on a stamp. In a Time magazine online poll to find the 100 most influential people of 2009, Pacquiao had so far garnered more than 20 million votes.

But in the gym, under Roach, there had been a remodeling of Pacquiao's style that had come to fruition, making use of his blistering hand speed while developing a mental toughness through a rigorous sparring and fitness regimen. "Pacquiao, physically, became a fighting machine," Roach explained.

Fearless, he stood toe-to-toe with his opponents, almost impossibly light on his feet, and seemed to answer every punch taken with three of his own.

Pacquiao joined a group of us at Nat's Thai Food restaurant in the quad outside the gym. He had just completed 16 rounds of sparring against four different fighters, 12 rounds on the pads with Roach and an hour's run in the Hollywood Hills with his Jack Russell terrier, with whom he shared the nickname "Pac Man." He then signed autographs for all the people gathered. It took two hours.

"I have to give people time to take a picture and sign autographs. I have to be generous to people. It is in my heart. Without that, I would not be Manny Pacquiao," he said, ordering boiled eggs and a salad. "I believe that being famous means one of your responsibilities is to give. I'm just a regular person who believes life is simple, and I like a simple life. I have a lot of friends around me. I'm happy with that. Of course, in the ring, you have to be a warrior, but outside the ring, people know I'm friendly."

A sixth divisional title (140 pounds) was claimed at the expense of Britain's Ricky Hatton in Las Vegas ...

Later, I was granted a visit to his L.A. apartment where there were around 40 people cooking, singing, chatting. They are his entourage, his family. Outside, there were armed guards on patrol.

When not training in California, Pacquiao would return to a presidential-style mansion in General Santos City, Mindanao, with his wife, Jinkee, and their children. The compound was manned 24/7 by armed security guards (there had been threats made against his children in the past). He was building homes for his siblings, his mother and his father, whom he reconciled with publicly in 2006. Outside his house, long queues would form – people down on their luck. Pacquiao found it difficult to refuse them. He was then funding 250 children through school in his neighborhood through a foundation set up several years earlier. Some were orphans, others had parents who requested his help. Since his last fight against De La Hoya in December, he had organized the import of 350 American-built hospital beds destined for wards around the General Santos region, a fire engine and an ambulance, and was overseeing the rebuilding of the LM Gym in Manila into an apartment complex incorporating a boxing gym in the basement.

At his American apartment, I asked him how he felt about the widespread poverty in the Philippines. He fixed me with a steely look. "Poverty does not make me angry," he said. "But it makes me feel bad inside, and I want to help. I want the people of the Philippines to

be happy, even if they have nothing. Even if they can just have enough to eat food three times a day. I feel so bad because God gave us everything to live in this world, so why don't we share with other people?"

The fight with Hatton was another destructive blur from the Filipino. There was no sign of the Hatton who had defeated Kostya Tszyu four years earlier, or even the Briton who had challenged Floyd Mayweather late in 2007: the bullish, raw, rugged fighter who relentlessly came at his opponent. Instead, Hatton was floored by the brutal, technical superiority of Pacquiao in two devastating rounds at the MGM Grand Garden Arena. The defeated, deflated Hatton had been felled by a crunching left hook that left him prone on the canvas. The denouement was brutal and emphatic.

... and a seventh (147 pounds) was collected when the great Miguel Cotto was stopped in the final round.

To the victor went the spoils, as witnessed by a sell-out crowd of 16,262 and millions on television. Pacquiao, $20 million richer, the Ring Magazine junior welterweight title now in his possession, enjoyed an hour of karaoke on stage at the Mandalay Bay Resort after his perfect plan came together. Three knockdowns, six minutes of work, one cut on his face from a Hatton elbow. Job done. There were the noises that Hatton had been in Las Vegas for too long, that trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. had not been a good match for the Mancunian. But these explanations merely papered over the cracks. The reality was that Pacquiao was too fast, too accurate and too good. Hatton looked vulnerable and confused. And ultimately a broken figure.

Then there was Miguel Cotto. Again, it was the mesmerizing ring skills of Pacquiao that shone through in Las Vegas once more when he delivered another breathtaking performance to dismantle the WBO welterweight champion and become the first fighter to win world titles across seven weight divisions.

The game plan was clinically executed: Pacquiao first lured Cotto into attacking him, soaked up the pressure and counterpunched, and then started to dominate his opponent from the middle rounds onward. As with De La Hoya, some had claimed this would be the toughest test of Pacquiao's career, and yet Cotto's punches bounced off the Filipino fighter, who nullified his opponent's power and appeared not to be hurt once during the contest. Cotto had been reduced to a slow fighter who could only dance and try to survive for the last few rounds, but Pacquiao's slashing attacks saw referee Kenny Bayless step in to stop the damaged Puerto Rican from taking any more punishment 55 seconds into the final session. The Puerto Rican, in spite of rallying in the 10th round, had simply absorbed enough punishment.

Roach believed a superfight with Mayweather would cement the Filipino's legacy. "The whole world wants to see him fight Mayweather, and I want Mayweather," Roach said. The Filipino looked capable at this stage of stretching 'Money' further than any other fighter had dared. We expected months of wrangling before an early summer fight in Las Vegas in 2010. The world now had a right to know which of the two was the rightful pound-for-pound king. Sadly, the boxing world would wait more than four years for the fight to materialize.

But at this point, Pacquiao had risen to crossover stardom. It was a year in which Pacquiao was bathed in a golden light and had become one of the legends of boxing, comparable to any era.

Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for The London Telegraph.

Former three-time welterweight titleholder Antonio Margarito would never quit, but he received horrendous facial injuries during his 12 rounds with Pacquiao.

NICK LAHNAM

A CLASS OF HIS OWN

WITH HIS DESTRUCTION OF **ANTONIO MARGARITO** FOR A 154-POUND TITLE, **PACQUIAO** SOLIDIFIED HIS STATUS AS A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME CHAMPION

By **Michael Rosenthal**

Antonio Margarito lay on a cot in his dressing room, his face broken and bloodied, as he waited in silence for an ambulance to take him to a hospital. Suddenly an unexpected visitor entered. Manny Pacquiao, his opponent that night, offered greetings and a warm smile and then closed his eyes to pray.

The contrast with the events that preceded that serene moment couldn't have been more stark. The same man who showed Margarito such compassion tore him apart only minutes earlier.

Pacquiao was at the peak of his extraordinary ability on November 13, 2010, the night he met the ill-fated Margarito before 40,000-plus at Cowboys Stadium (now AT&T Stadium) outside Dallas. His speed, his power, his footwork, it was all on full display for the world to admire and completely baffle Margarito.

The once-feared Mexican fought bravely until he heard the final bell, but he didn't really compete with Pacquiao. He merely survived. And he ended up on that cot as a result.

Pacquiao made history that night, winning a major title in an unfathomable eighth weight class even though Margarito was 5½ inches taller and a reported 18 pounds heavier than he was when they met in the ring.

Here is the story of Pacquiao vs. Margarito.

TOM PENNINGTON

A CLASS OF HIS OWN

Pacquiao was a legend by the fall of 2010. The Filipino dynamo, quick, powerful, somehow magical, had crossed over to superstardom in 2008 and 2009 when he knocked out, in succession, David Diaz, Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton and Miguel Cotto. Even cynical observers, dizzy with excitement, made comparisons to the great Henry Armstrong, who held titles in three divisions simultaneously when there were only eight and almost won a fourth.

The next logical step for Pacquiao was a showdown with the only man who was on his level at that time, Floyd Mayweather, who seemed always to have one foot in boxing and the other somewhere else.

Alas, a second round of negotiations between the two camps fell apart when Mayweather allowed a deadline set by promoter Bob Arum to pass "without a word," as The Associated Press put it at the time. And Pacquiao moved on for the time being, as the two superstars wouldn't meet for another five years.

"I'm not interested in rushing to do anything," Mayweather said a few days after the talks ended.

It was on to Plan B.

Pacquiao and Arum, his longtime promoter, considered a rematch with Miguel Cotto, who was stopped by Pacquiao the previous November, but decided to go a different, perhaps more intriguing direction: It was announced that Pacquiao, who started his career as a 106-pounder, would fight the imposing Antonio Margarito for the vacant WBC 154-pound title.

The matchup would give Pacquiao an opportunity to win a major title in a record eighth division and Margarito, a favorite of Latino fans because of his brawling, never-say-die style, presumably would help sell the event.

The logistics were tricky, though. Margarito was still in the boxing doghouse in the United States after he was caught with loaded hand wraps before his knockout loss to Shane Mosley in January 2009 at Staples Center in Los Angeles, after which he and trainer Javier Capetillo had their licenses revoked by the California State Athletic Commission.

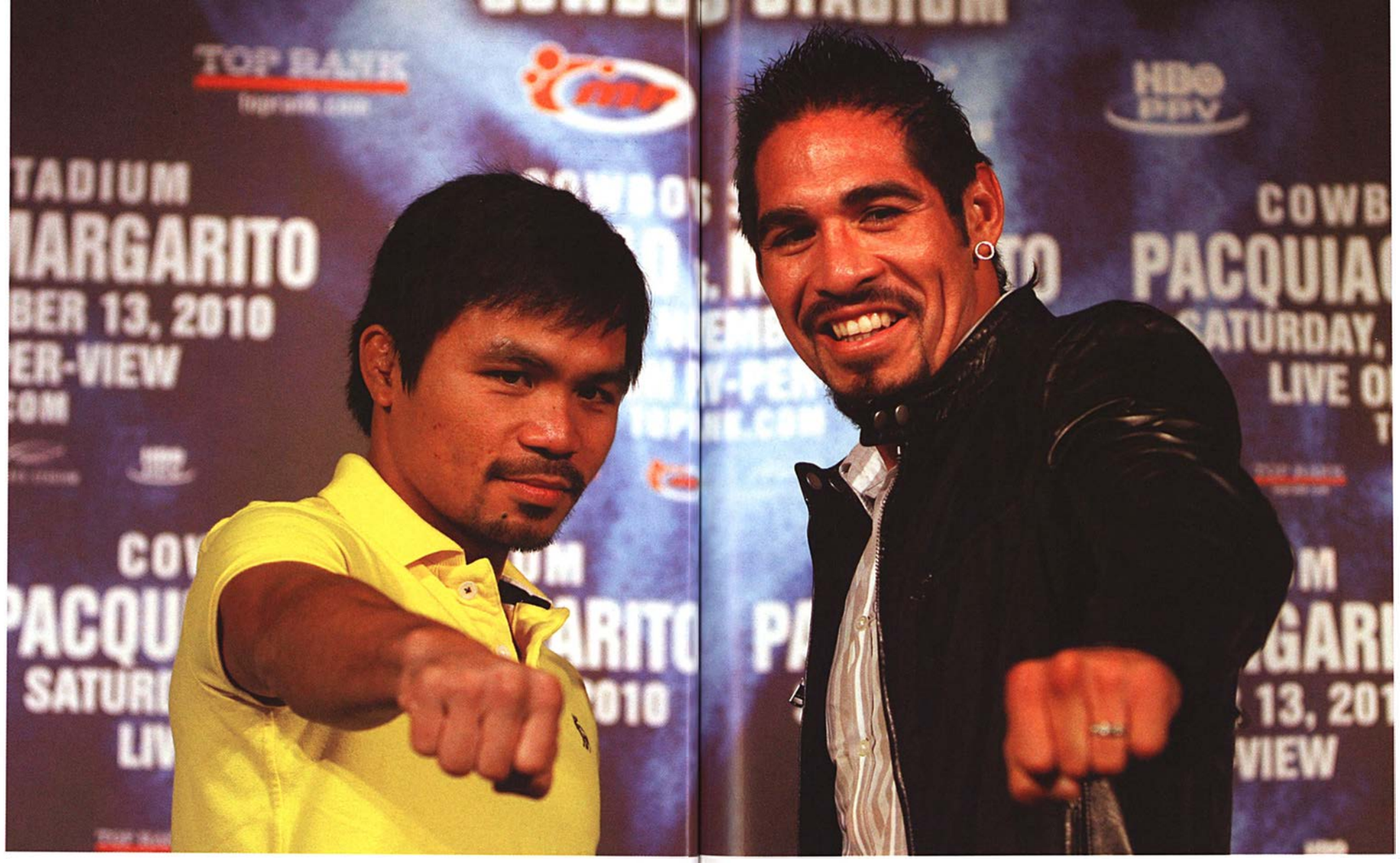
Margarito, who was stopped by Mosley, fought Roberto Garcia in May 2010 in Mexico, but it was unclear whether he could get a license north of the border. Arum hoped to stage the fight in Las Vegas.

"The fight means so much economically to Nevada," Arum said. "I cannot conceive the commission turning down [Margarito's] request."

It did. Nevada officials handed the shamed fighter's fate to California because he had been suspended there, and his application was rejected.

That's when Arum turned to Texas, where a $20 fee and a doctor's OK was enough to get Margarito through the door. Pacquiao would face the bigger man at the cavernous home of the Dallas Cowboys, where Pacquiao nearly shut out a reluctant Joshua Clottey in front of 50,994 in March.

The fight was on. Pacquiao would have his chance to make history. And Margarito, who Arum thought had been treated unfairly, was back in the game.



ALLEN J. SCHABEN

Margarito had size and strength on his side. Pacquiao had everything else.

Freddie Roach, Pacquiao's trainer, and Robert Garcia (not to be confused with Margarito's previous opponent, Roberto), who began working with Margarito post-Mosley, focused on the exact same thing when they first heard the matchup was a possibility: the size difference.

Pacquiao, 31, had graduated to the welterweight division but was small for the weight class, which is why he demanded a catchweight of 150 pounds for the junior middleweight fight. Margarito, who fought Mosley at welterweight, happily obliged. Still, the idea of little Manny Pacquiao tangling with a strapping slugger like Antonio Margarito made a lot of people nervous.

"We all thought – Margarito, myself, his managers – we all thought he was too big for this guy," Robert Garcia told The Ring recently. "We thought, 'No way this guy is going to take you 12 rounds.' Maybe the first half of the fight it would be similar to Cotto (in his first fight with Margarito), but after that, Margarito would break him down."

Meanwhile, Roach, who had guided Pacquiao to greatness, wasn't entirely comfortable with the idea initially.

"I remember thinking that this was a little bit crazy," he said. "Margarito was a little bit too big for him. But then Manny said, 'With my speed, I can beat him. Let's go to the Philippines and get ready for the fight.' It was what we normally did, so we did it."

Both trainers were pleased with their respective camps, Pacquiao in the Philippines and then at the Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood; Margarito at Garcia's gym in Oxnard, California, about 50 miles north of Tinseltown.

The fighters had one thing in common: fanaticism when it came to fitness. No one worked harder than Pacquiao, except perhaps Margarito. The former welterweight titleholder knew his limitations as a boxer and an athlete. He won fights with strength, conditioning and determination, generally outlasting his opponents.

"He never stopped training," Garcia said.

The sparring partners were selected using logical criteria.

For Pacquiao, Roach enlisted big, strong fighters and also threw in Amir Khan, the quick-handed Englishman who would help Pacquiao work on his vaunted speed. Sparring was productive, but Roach knew that the danger he faced against Margarito superseded anything he could create in the gym.

"They wear eight-ounce gloves (in actual fights)," he said. "The gloves get smaller and the punches get harder."

For Margarito, Garcia brought in Austin Trout, U.S. Olympian Ricardo Williams and other quick, athletic boxers who he hoped could replicate some of the challenges that Pacquiao would pose. True to form, Margarito would start slowly against them in sparring but gradually wear them down.

Garcia felt good on fight night.

"I was very, very confident," he said. "I thought it was going to be a fight that would surprise the whole world and we could come out the winner. He was looking so strong, so powerful in the gym. There was no way Pacquiao could handle his strength and power.

"Well, it turned out Pacquiao was at a different level, a special fighter, a guy you see maybe once in a hundred years."

Perhaps the most striking thing about AT&T Stadium is its mammoth replay screen, which is 60 yards (55 meters) wide. I remember looking up at the screen and seeing Pacquiao before the opening bell and thinking, "Man, he looks like Godzilla."

That's the way he fought.

Margarito opened the fight by jabbing effectively, which is something

A CLASS OF HIS OWN

Garcia emphasizes with all his fighters. Pacquiao danced, threw punches here and there, avoided any possible trouble and bided his time in the first few rounds.

Then he let loose. In Round 3, Pacquiao, in perfect rhythm, unloaded rapid-fire combinations from all possible angles that Margarito couldn't see, let alone block or avoid. Margarito, in a moment of bravado, smiled at Pacquiao after one of the breathtaking flurries, but this was painfully serious business.

No one could've known it at the time, but based on the swelling under Margarito's eye, his orbital bone might've been broken in the third round. He would fight another nine-plus rounds with the injury, a testament to his courage and resolve but not the best idea in terms of his long-term health.

Garcia knew that he and his protégé had a problem.

"Those body shots were really powerful, really fast," he said. "Margarito just couldn't see them coming. It got to a point where there wasn't much anyone could do. The combination of speed and power was too much.

"I remembering thinking, 'What the fuck am I going to tell him in the corner?' There was nothing I could say, just motivation. Pacquiao had an answer for everything."

Naturally, Margarito never stopped coming. And for a fleeting moment in the sixth round, it seemed as if brute force might actually produce something positive. He trapped Pacquiao against the ropes twice and landed some hard punches, including one to the body that hurt him.

Roach, a tad worried, asked Pacquiao in the corner after the round whether he was OK. The fighter responded, "Yeah, I'm fine." Margarito wouldn't have that kind of success again.

Pacquiao continued to box circles around his slow, helpless prey, throwing combinations, quickly moving to one side or the other and then throwing another combination. Margarito's eyes were closing. Another combination. Cuts opened in two places. Another combination. His swollen face was covered in blood. Another combination. It never stopped.

"The speed factor was so overwhelming. He couldn't handle Manny's speed," Roach said.

Margarito was never going to give up. As Garcia said, "He was the type of fighter who would die in the ring before he would quit." That concept wasn't lost on Pacquiao, who in the 11th round essentially begged referee Laurence Cole to stop the fight. He didn't.

Neither did Garcia, a young trainer at the time. He thought about stepping in but deferred to Margarito's managers, both of whom were in the corner and neither of whom suggested the fight should be stopped.

I asked Garcia recently what comes to mind when he thinks about that fight and he didn't hesitate before responding.

"I should've stopped it," he said, "Yeah, I should've stopped it. Like I said earlier, we had the managers in the corner. They'd been there his whole career. The doctor checked him between rounds. The referee was close to him every time he got hit.

"It wasn't just my decision. I was the new guy on the team. But if it happened today? I would've stopped it, definitely."

Margarito survived to hear the final bell. He ended up in a hospital with a career-threatening injury, but at least he could say with pride that he never gave up and finished the fight on his feet, which was, indeed, an accomplishment given the pounding he took.

FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

A great small man beats up a good big man.

Pacquiao was ecstatic. The onetime mighty mite had not only beaten a much bigger, stronger man, he dominated him to win by scores of 120-108 (a shutout), 119-109 and a generous 118-110. And he got that title in an eighth division – out of 17 total weight classes – which is one of the greatest feats in the history of the sport and perhaps clinched his place among the best fighters ever.

"I can't believe that I beat someone this big and this strong," Pacquiao said in the ring. "It's hard. I really do my best to win the fight."

Pacquiao, now 41, has a looooooooooong list of accomplishments in a career that has spanned a quarter of a century, including an age-defying split-decision victory over Keith Thurman to win another welterweight title and enhance his legacy in July of last year.

Where does the victory over Margarito rank?

"Definitely in the top three because of [Margarito's] size," Roach said. "The De La Hoya fight might've been a little more enjoyable, but this one was special. I remember politicians back in the Philippines told us not to do it. They thought Manny would get hurt in that fight … Then beating a guy like that, and the way he beat him, was just unbelievable. Even amazing.

"Manny is still looking for more fights down the road. We talked the other day. He said maybe one, two more fights. I said, 'OK. Just be careful. We're not fighting heavyweights now.'"

Margarito?

He was never the same. He had surgery to repair the orbital bone at Methodist Hospital in Dallas three days after the fight and didn't fight for almost 13 months to allow it time to heal. He fought Cotto a second time in December 2011, but the fight was stopped by the ring doctor because of swelling under the damaged eye. He left the sport for more than four years.

Margarito tried to make a comeback in 2016, fought three times and then walked away for good.

"The eye was never the same," Garcia said. "He always said, 'I'm good, I'm good,' but the eye was never the same. And it 100 percent affected him in the ring. He always had heart, though. He was always in great shape. He never gave up, to the last fight with Cotto.

"He was getting hit with everything, but he still didn't want to give up. He was still complaining long after the doctors stopped the fight. That's how he was."

Roach insisted that Pacquiao was motivated for the Margarito fight in part by the loaded gloves scandal. He was angry, Roach said, that Margarito was willing to place Mosley's well-being in jeopardy by cheating.

Pacquiao fought as if he was angry, at least until the late rounds. He wanted Cole to stop it in Round 11. He coasted in Round 12 to save Margarito from further punishment.

And there was the visit to Margarito's dressing room after the fight, for which he was accompanied by his wife. Pacquiao's animosity gave way to his humanitarian instincts, his kind nature, which is no surprise to those who have followed his career.

Manny Pacquiao. Wonderful person, wonderful boxer. He might've been at his best in both respects that night in Dallas.

THE LETDOWN

PACQUIAO VS. MAYWEATHER
WAS THE FIGHT EVERYBODY WANTED FOR YEARS, BUT THE CLASH OF SUPERSTARS ENDED UP BEING A SUPER STINKER

By **Don Stradley**

Following their ho-hum welterweight title bout in May 2015, Pacquiao and Mayweather, beneficiaries of colossal paydays, were the only ones smiling.

JOHN GURZINSKI

It wasn't until the middle of Round 4 that Manny Pacquiao broke through the defense of Floyd Mayweather Jr., but he did so with great élan, ramming a straight left directly into Mayweather's mouth. It was the punch that boxing fans had waited years to see, and upon impact Mayweather grimaced; he stumbled back a few steps, a signal that he had indeed felt it and didn't want another one. Instinctively, Mayweather leaned on the ropes and cupped his gloves over his face, an octopus behind an inky cloud. Pacquiao quickly unloaded a dozen or so quick punches, some landing, some not, until he realized his opponent had created a kind of impenetrable sanctuary. Pacquiao backed off, Mayweather slid out of trouble, and at round's end it appeared the entire crowd of 16,129 was up and roaring. This was why they'd filled the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas that May night in 2015. They'd paid to see Pacquiao chopping away with his left hand and Mayweather scrambling for safety. Here's hoping they enjoyed these few seconds of suspense. It was all they'd get. »

As far as "Fight of the Century"-type events go, Mayweather-Pacquiao may be remembered as the worst of all time. Financially, of course, it was a colossus. Mayweather, who co-promoted the fight with Top Rank, ended up with approximately $230 million, while Pacquiao went home with around $150 million, grotesque paydays for such an unmemorable contest. Along with breaking all existing records for pay-per-view buys (4.6 million) and pay-per-view revenue ($437 million), the bout drew an astonishing live gate of more than $72 million and many more millions from closed-circuit screenings. The staggering numbers reflected some wildly inflated ticket and PPV prices but were also a result of the fight's worldwide interest. While a number of title belts were at stake – Mayweather was The Ring's welterweight champion at the time – this fight wasn't about titles. It was a chance to see the two top boxers of their generation meet in a ring. Though they'd had extraordinary careers already, many believed that only if they fought each other would their respective stories be complete.

Never mind that the fight was supposed to have taken place in 2010 but had failed to get beyond negotiations several times since then. Never mind the endless arguments over how the money would be split or how drug testing would be handled. Never mind that Pacquiao was 36 and not quite as dynamic as he'd once been, or that 38-year-old Mayweather's style wasn't conducive to thrills. Somehow, these two little men inspired fans to pay up to $10,000 for a ringside seat, or $100 to stay home and watch in high-definition. Though Mayweather certainly had his supporters, the overriding hope was that Pacquiao would not only crack the code of boxing's best defensive fighter, but would do so in a violent and relentless manner, something akin to Richard the Lionheart's crusaders slamming into Saladin's army. It was of such dreams that the era's biggest fight was made.

Pacquiao and Mayweather had ascended to the top of boxing at roughly the same time, a fallow period when the stars of the previous era (Roy Jones, Felix Trinidad, etc.) were beginning to fray. Not surprisingly, there were times when Mayweather appeared irritated by Pacquiao's mere existence. No matter how loudly Mayweather proclaimed himself the world's best fighter, it was Pacquiao who usually sat atop The Ring's monthly pound-for-pound list, and it was Pacquiao who was chosen three times as The Ring's Fighter of the Year, as well as Fighter of the Decade for the 2000s. That many fans and aficionados preferred Pacquiao was bewildering for Mayweather; he deflected his critics by saying they knew nothing about boxing. The truth was that Pacquiao was simply more entertaining. Mayweather was methodical, crafty; Pacquiao was the exuberant improviser.

"PACQUIAO DWARFED MAYWEATHER IN TERMS OF CHARISMA AND LIKABILITY."

Pacquiao also dwarfed Mayweather in terms of charisma and likability. Whether he was the scrappy junior featherweight making his American debut or the more mature Filipino congressman of later years, he displayed a mischievous, carefree attitude. Add to this his propensity for singing hokey love songs and a handful of roles in cheesy action flicks, and Pacquiao had enough personal quirks to make him strangely endearing, even to those of us who didn't speak a word of Tagalog. Sometimes he was downright eccentric. In 2010, at what was probably the height of "Mannymania," he appeared at the Boxing Writers Association of America's annual dinner to receive the Sugar Ray Robinson Award for Fighter of the Year. He didn't approach the dais alone, however; he had one of his flunkies with him. The unknown gentleman was waving what looked like a giant gourd in the air, sprinkling the path in front of Pacquiao with what appeared to be ... fairy dust? This ritual, we later learned, was to protect Pacquiao from evil forces that might've attended the BWAA function. (No doubt the place was packed with dark entities.) Of course, Pacquiao's idiosyncrasies would've meant nothing if he hadn't been such a compelling fighter.

Mayweather tried to show some personality, but appearances on *Dancing With The Stars* and Wrestlemania XXIV did little for him, nor did a period of time when he entered the ring wearing outlandish gear, some of it looking like he'd raided Hector Camacho's closet. Eventually he put his chinchilla trunks aside and settled into his "Money" persona. Though it seemed he was merely dredging up clichés from old hip-hop videos, this version of Mayweather clicked with audiences. It was as if the 2008 recession had left fans yearning for just such a free-spending, churlish character. He also kept a zealot's devotion to remaining undefeated. Few of his fights were worth archiving, but it appeared no one could beat him.

Still, boxing fans thrive on fantasies, and the ongoing fantasy was that Pacquiao, even the 2015 model,

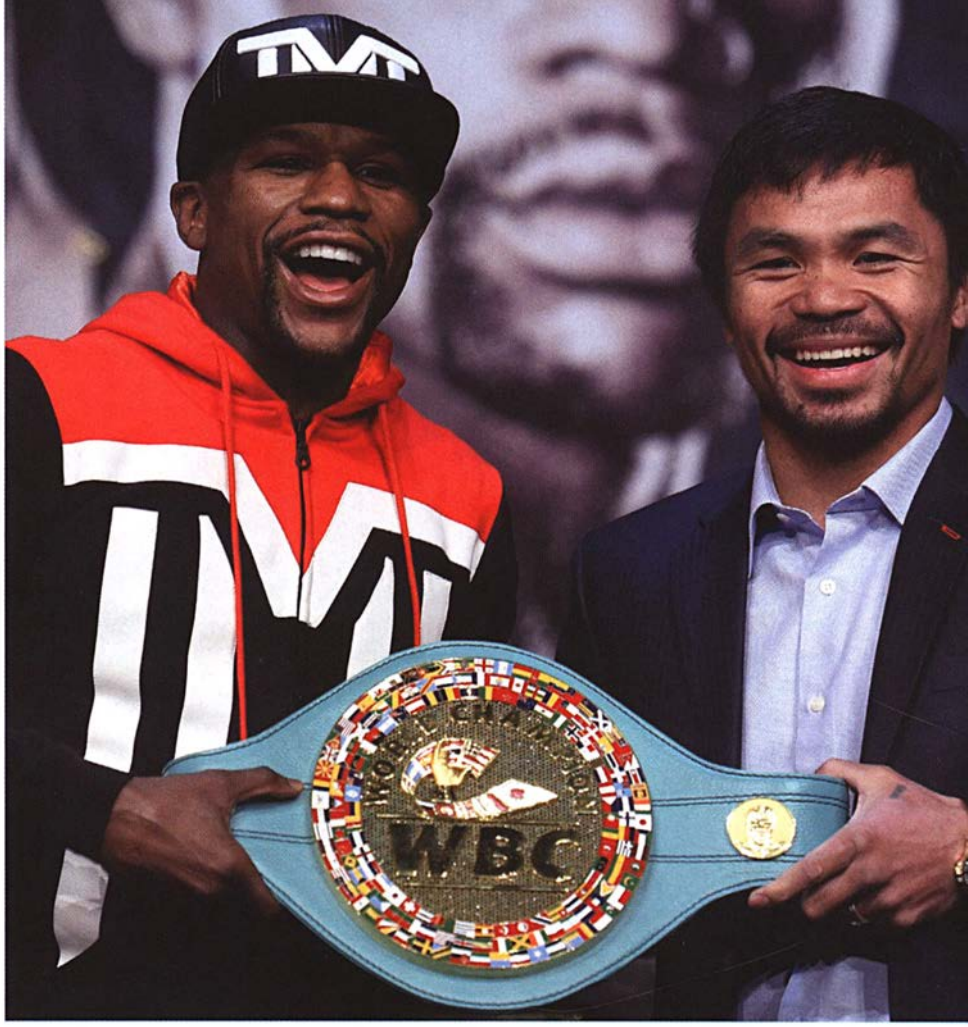
Pacquiao's vaunted aggression was thwarted by the defensive prowess of Mayweather.

could break through Mayweather's shell. Baked into our minds were a few hopeful axioms: This late-period Mayweather couldn't punch hard enough to ward off Pacquiao; Mayweather had trouble with southpaws; Mayweather had been pushed to the edge in a recent bout with Marcos Maidana, a strong but unsophisticated fighter not in Pacquiao's class. All of this surely meant that Pacquiao had a reasonable chance to hand Mayweather his first defeat and helped the event become a phenomenon. Interest in this fight was so great that airlines added larger planes to carry masses of people to Las Vegas, and the logjam of home orders caused cable providers no end to headaches on fight night, including temporary shutdowns that left thousands of home viewers staring at blank screens.

With any luck, their services were restored in time to see Pacquiao's attack on Mayweather in Round 4. Pacquiao had another good rally in the sixth where he forced Mayweather into the ropes and scored with some body shots. Shane Mosley, who had lost to both fighters, was in attendance and claimed Pacquiao looked to be holding his own in a close fight.

"In the arena, it seemed that Pacquiao was doing a little bit more," Mosley told BoxingScene.com, "but when I watched it at home, it was different – it seemed that Floyd was doing a little more than Pacquiao was."

If Pacquiao had been somewhat competitive in the early going, he spent the second half of the bout chasing after Mayweather, who glided around the ring and avoided harm. Perhaps after tasting a bit of Pacquiao's offense in Round 4, Mayweather decided his best option was to keep his distance and do just enough to win rounds. It became clear that Pacquiao was a tad shopworn after more than 60 professional bouts, and that a fellow who had started his career as a junior flyweight was far too small to run roughshod over Mayweather the way his supporters imagined he might.



An assortment of welterweight baubles was on the line in Las Vegas.

In the end, it was a workmanlike performance from a pair of fading athletes. At the final bell, fans jeered.

Mayweather was awarded a unanimous decision by scores of 118-110, 116-112 and 116-112. After the contest, he hailed Pacquiao as "a hell of a fighter."

Pacquiao, meanwhile, was less than magnanimous.

"I thought I won the fight," Pacquiao said. "He didn't do anything."

Indeed, a tiny faction of observers thought Pacquiao had maybe deserved a draw or even a win, but most accepted the verdict rendered in Las Vegas.

Disappointment in the long-awaited event increased when Pacquiao revealed he'd gone into the ring with a tear in his right rotator cuff. Pacquiao believed he could be injected with numbing agents before the fight, but Nevada officials denied his request for shots and denied knowledge of any injury. Then came stories of botched paperwork, ugly accusations from both camps, debates over who was at fault and an MRI scan that showed Pacquiao undeniably had a tear that would require surgery. Pacquiao claimed everyone, even Mayweather, knew about the injury through gym leaks, and even accused Mayweather of tugging on his damaged right arm during the fight. Pacquiao argued that he was denied his painkillers because he was fighting on Mayweather's home ground of Las Vegas. "We were sabotaged," Pacquiao said.

Cynics, including Mayweather, felt Pacquiao was simply making excuses to create a return bout. However, the fight had no rematch clause and co-promoter Bob Arum was in no hurry to revisit what he called "the most hellish time of my professional career."

There also was scant evidence that fans were clamoring for another Mayweather-Pacquiao bout. If they

hadn't learned their lesson before – that Mayweather would rather dive into a lake of broken glass than engage in an actual fistfight – they certainly knew it now. Besides, the pairing of the man-child (Pacquiao) and the childish man (Mayweather) simply lacked the chemistry to make a rematch worthwhile.

The fight's immediate aftermath saw Pacquiao become a target of scorn. Class-action suits were filed against Pacquiao's team and the promoters for not informing the public of his injury, while Las Vegas gamblers who had bet on Pacquiao ranted about wanting their money back. Hardcore boxing fans took the fight in stride as a typical, though overpriced, Mayweather production, while casual watchers and mainstream sportswriters were outraged by the fight's lack of drama. Many journalists, particularly those who hadn't watched boxing since the Gerry Cooney era, announced in their columns that the fight game had finally reached its nadir. "If that's the best boxing has to offer," reported the Reno Gazette-Journal, "the sport is past life support."

Somehow, Pacquiao endured. The bad press over the Mayweather fight was forgotten, and he eventually revived his career with a series of impressive wins. Although it had been a fight everyone wanted to see, the loss hardly mattered to his legacy. The reason is that Pacquiao wasn't about wins and losses. From the first time we saw him, he was about excitement or, in his own words, "making the people happy."

Certain fighters can lose fights and it isn't held against them. Maybe the best example of this was Jack Dempsey. He lost twice to Gene Tunney, but it was Dempsey, not Tunney, who was remembered as the boxing icon of his times. Chances are it will be Pacquiao we talk about in the future, not Mayweather. This inexplicable charm that he shares with Dempsey, Muhammad Ali, Roberto Duran and a handful of others will guarantee it. Even Pacquiao's personal life, which has included a few controversies and missteps, has gone on without much negative press. Nothing sticks to Pacquiao, least of all a forgettable loss to Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Pacquiao also has the benefit of conjecture. His devotees insist he would've done better had he faced Mayweather when the fight was first mentioned in 2009, or that he would've shined in a rematch, once his shoulder injury was sorted out. It's as if the fantasy that existed before the bout remains intact, one where a healthy Pacquiao knocks Mayweather into orbit.

Then again, we saw the fight. Mayweather won. Pacquiao lost. Everything else is fairy dust.

The old rivals catch up at an L.A. Clippers game in 2019 at Staples Center.

OLD GLORY

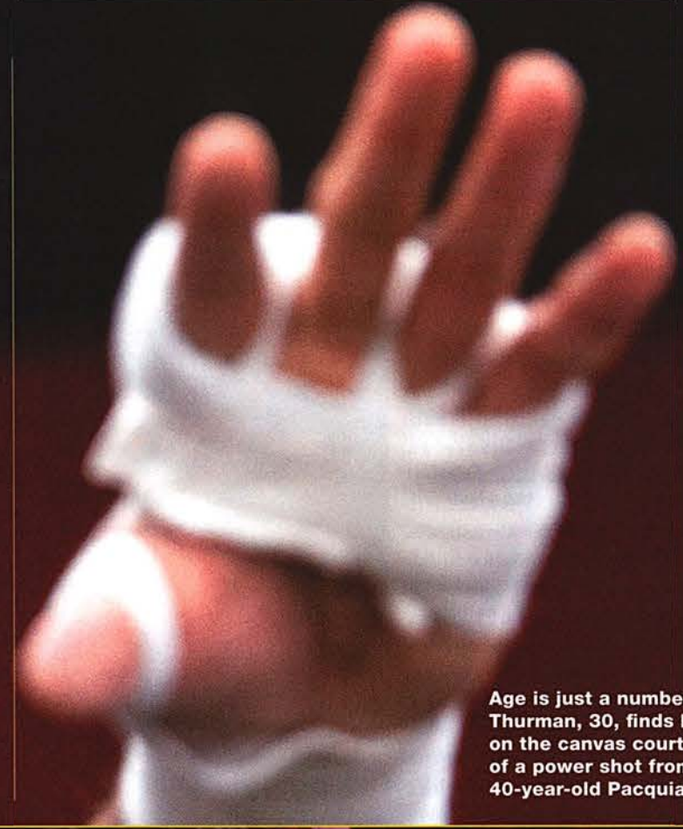
A 40-YEAR-OLD **PACQUIAO** VS. AN UNDEFEATED, 30-YEAR-OLD **KEITH THURMAN** WAS SEEN BY MANY AS A RECIPE FOR RETIREMENT, BUT THE SENATOR'S ABILITY TO ASTONISH WAS AS HEALTHY AS EVER

By **Dan Rafael**

A quarter of a century into his remarkable career and Manny Pacquiao was still making boxing history when he outpointed Keith Thurman in one of his best performances to claim a welterweight world title in July 2019.

Pacquiao's prior accomplishments are considerable, most notably as the only fighter to win world titles in eight weight classes, moving from flyweight to junior middleweight to claim major belts or the lineage. Perhaps it would have been 10 divisions had he campaigned at junior bantamweight or bantamweight.

Three times Pacquiao was the Ring Fighter of the Year; he was also the Fighter of the Decade for the 2000s. He will go down as perhaps the greatest southpaw in history and No. 1 Asian fighter ever, and certainly he's in a class by himself as the best fighter ever from the Philippines. »



Age is just a number. Thurman, 30, finds himself on the canvas courtesy of a power shot from a 40-year-old Pacquiao.

MB MEDIA

OLD GLORY

On the business side, Pacquiao's long-anticipated 2015 megafight with Floyd Mayweather ranks as the sport's biggest blockbuster, shattering every conceivable revenue record, in a career filled with huge pay-per-views.

But as he claimed another dose of glory with his well-deserved split decision (115-112, 115-112, 113-114) over the 30-year-old, then-undefeated Thurman before an adoring crowd at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, the site of so many of his biggest moments, Pacquiao had etched himself into the record book once again.

Father Time, of course, is undefeated, but he still hasn't figured out Pacquiao (62-7-2, 39 KOs), who at 40 years, seven months and three days, had become the oldest fighter to win a welterweight title in the glorious history of one of boxing's most popular weight classes. The win made Pacquiao, whose priority isn't even boxing anymore now that he's a senator in the Philippines, the fifth-oldest boxer to win a world title in any division, surpassed only by fellow legends such as Bernard Hopkins and George Foreman.

"He's in the history books anyway, but this (welterweight title) secures it," said Hall of Fame trainer Freddie Roach, who has been with Pacquiao since his first fight in the United States in 2001. "I think about that fight many times at night. I still have dreams about that fight."

That Pacquiao, who turns 42 in December, could again reach such lofty heights at his age was even more impressive considering that it was all the way back in 2012, after he was knocked out cold face-first by Juan Manuel Marquez in the sixth round of their fourth fight, that there were questions about whether he would ever even fight again, much less find himself back on the pound-for-pound list.

After he lost a highly controversial decision and a welterweight title to Jeff Horn on Horn's turf in Australia in 2017, many called for Pacquiao's retirement. Even Roach thought Pacquiao should consider it, which led to a one-fight separation. Though most thought Pacquiao clearly won, his performance was ragged and it looked like his days as an elite boxer were over, having finally seen the ravages of a long career catch up with him.

But he returned a year later and looked sharp stopping a faded Lucas Matthysse in the seventh round and then coasted to a decision win over Adrien Broner in January 2019 to set up what was universally viewed as by far Pacquiao's toughest fight since facing Mayweather four years earlier.

"One Time" Thurman, making his sixth defense, was 29-0 with 22 KOs, owned a resume that included victories over elite opponents Shawn Porter and Danny Garcia – fighters in their prime – and had sky-high confidence that had him predicting a sixth-round knockout that would end Pacquiao's career.

Sean Gibbons, the president of Pacquiao's MP Promotions and longtime Pacquiao confidant, had been charged with coming up with the right opponent for Pacquiao.

"First and foremost, as a matchmaker – which is what I made my first foray into the game as – as I looked at Keith Thurman I saw a very athletic guy. I saw a tremendous all-around fighter," Gibbons said. "But being he was coming off injuries and a little inactivity, I felt the timing of the fight was perfect. But it's a roll of the dice a little, too. But I always said it's 'Eight-Time and One-Time.' That's the difference. The great ones are the great ones, even at an advanced age of 40. They're a little diminished, but Pacquiao had a lot more left than I had thought. So it came down to Manny is a better fighter and he knows how to win."

Gibbons said Pacquiao had no issues with accepting Thurman as his opponent right away. After Gibbons and Premier Boxing Champions honcho Al Haymon discussed potential foes, they agreed Thurman made the most sense, believing it would be a good, competitive fight that would sell tickets and pay-per-views.

Gibbons traveled to Pacquiao's hometown of General Santos in the Philippines and met with him along with Pacquiao's attorney in April 2019.

JOHN GURZINSKI

Thurman pushed hard, but Pacquiao's fast start and accurate punching was too much for "One Time" to overcome.

"We're at his compound and we sit down with the senator. We told him we just need a few minutes to run this by you about an opponent for July," Gibbons said. "He said, 'Who is it?' We said welterweight champ Keith Thurman. He looked at me and his exact words were, 'Who's Keith Thurman?' I get on my phone and I show him a couple of clips of Thurman's fight with Josesito Lopez and he said OK. You'd think there's this big in-depth thing that goes into it, but this guy doesn't care who he fights."

All through the buildup, Pacquiao just smiled at Thurman's boasts and insults, and then when the bell rang made him eat his words.

"He had the best motivation in the world and it was called Keith Thurman," Gibbons said. "I love Keith Thurman. He's unbelievable promotionally and he came out and he fired the senator up. Manny was like, 'Keep talking, champ.' I've never seen him work so hard to prepare for a fight. [Thurman's talk] motivated him. Broner was chirping before their fight, but he's a clown. Thurman was a much more serious opponent."

Pacquiao's other motivation for the fight was winning the WBA title. He has won an assortment of belts during his 25-year career but never a full-fledged WBA version.

"Belts do matter. People can say what they want, but they matter, and the key was this was the belt the senator had never achieved," Gibbons said. "He had never won a WBA world title. He won an IBF, WBO, WBC, so it was very important for his legacy because this was the fourth major title. The [secondary WBA belt] he won against Matthysse wasn't the real title. The one he won from Thurman was the real deal."

Roach admitted they made

one major alteration to Pacquiao's training regimen to accommodate for his age. While Roach said Pacquiao still trains with abandon, they dramatically reduced the number of rounds he sparred. Typically Pacquiao would spar upwards of 160 rounds, but it was reduced to only about 80 ahead of the Thurman showdown.

"Manny was getting older and we didn't want to wear him out," Roach said. "So we cut back the rounds. We really cut it right in half. Sometimes when he was in prime we were going 160 rounds. He just didn't need that for this fight. He just needed to be sharp. Manny's workout hasn't changed at all. He's still very physical. He works really hard still. His work ethic is great and we just cut everything back a little bit.

"We came up with a game plan on how to beat this guy and Manny's speed was the No. 1 thing. We needed to have the speed and use it efficiently."

Whatever the tweak to his training, Roach said Pacquiao remains as hard a worker as he has encountered in decades of training.

"His passion is still there," Roach said. "He walks into the ring with a big smile on his face. He's really, really happy to be in the ring. That's what he loves best. It's really unusual. Usually, you see people lose the passion along the way, but not Manny. Manny is still hungry, still has the passion."

From the outset, Pacquiao was as sharp as he'd been in years. His speed, movement and reflexes were there. So, too, was his power as he dropped Thurman with a straight right hand with 25 seconds left in the first round. Pacquiao had taken control and it stayed that way through the first half of the fight, including in the fifth round, when Thurman looked shaky and was bleeding from the nose.

"He had an explosive start," Roach said. "It was something we hadn't seen in a while. It was great to see. He had a better start than finish, but the whole fight was pretty good. He fought well."

Even Foreman was impressed with Pacquiao's performance, at one point during the bout tweeting, "Thurman holds on to the older man Pac-Man making 40 look good now."

While Thurman did come back and take some rounds later in the fight, Pacquiao had a big 10th round, visibly hurting the younger man with a left to the body and sending him into retreat. Thurman was game for the battle in the final rounds but unable to do anything to change the course of the fight.

"I was like, 'Wow!' in that first round, but I didn't jump up and get excited. I was still tense," Gibbons said. "When Manny dropped him, it set the tone, even though Thurman had his moments. As we went into the sixth, now you're getting into the middle rounds, so now what's going to happen with the age of Pacquiao? He's 40 years old and against a 30-year-old, and I'm gonna tell you: Thurman was in the best shape of his life. He was bringing the heat. This is where you get nervous in a fight."

Commitment to training over the years has been a crucial part of Pacquiao's ability to prolong his career.

Even though Thurman won some of the middle rounds and marked up Pacquiao's face, Gibbons said he never thought Pacquiao was in any serious danger.

"Manny maybe took off a little in seven, eight and nine and it was getting interesting, but I never lost faith. I know the great ones. They have that extra something, that extra gear," Gibbons said. "What does Pacquiao do in the 10th? He found it, stepped on it, doubled him over with the body shot and busted up his nose. We were in the driver's seat going into the 11th and 12th. Keith hit Manny in the 11th with a straight

right and, 'Woooo!' That would drop a lot of guys, but Manny worked through it. Clean 7-5 win, maybe 8-4."

After Pacquiao completed his 486th pro round and was declared the winner, he climbed the ring post, belt draped over his shoulder, and bowed to the cheering fans and blew kisses.

"He fought a great fight. That performance made me so happy, because I love working with Manny Pacquiao," Roach said. "He's by far my best fighter ever and I think he always will be."

Wearing sunglasses at the post-fight press conference to hide the damage from the tough fight, Pacquiao was rightly proud of himself. He called it one of his biggest wins.

"I think I can rank this like the (Antonio) Margarito fight, (Oscar) De La Hoya fight, (the second Erik) Morales fight, (the second and third) Marquez fight, (first Marco Antonio) Barrera fight," Pacquiao said, comparing it with several other major victories.

He hadn't even mentioned a slew of others, such as against Miguel Cotto, Ricky Hatton and two over Timothy Bradley.

Even Thurman recognized the magnitude of Pacquiao's performance. Reflecting on the bout recently, Thurman opined, "His strength and conditioning were amazing at 40 years old. He didn't fight as hard as I believe a younger Manny would have. I think that's the only evidence (of his age). He still had so much agility and movement, and he fought a smart fight."

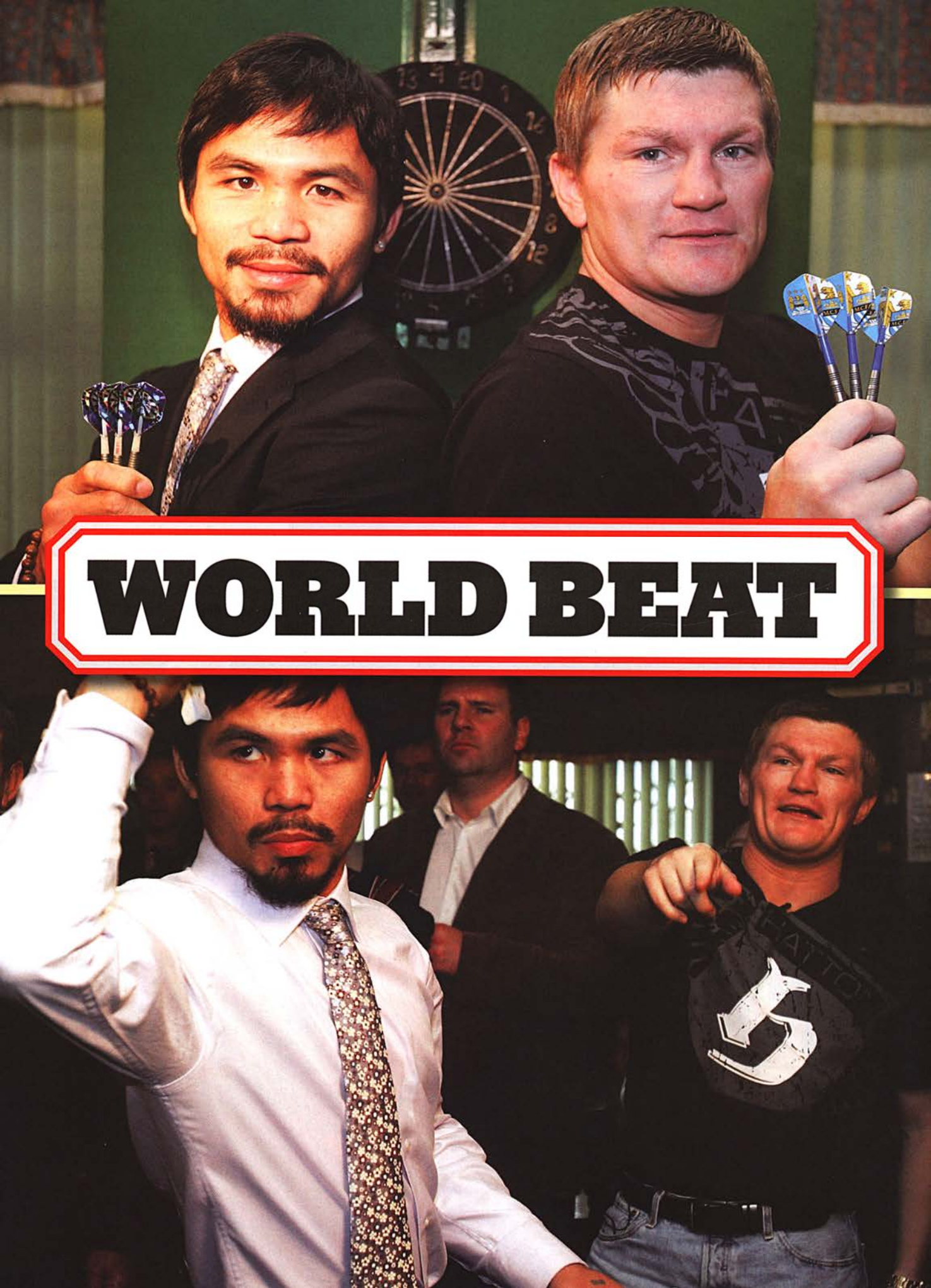
Pacquiao's place in boxing history was secured long ago, but beating Thurman added yet another memorable chapter and record to his extraordinary career.

"It's something that will never happen again in our lifetime," Gibbons said. "The senator still has the speed, the power, the feet. I asked Manny once, 'What keeps you doing this so well for so long at the highest level?' He goes, 'It's simple. When I train and I fight, that's what I do.' In between that, the man doesn't pick up a boxing glove, he doesn't think about fighting. He plays basketball. In-between fights, he doesn't want to hear about boxing. It's kept him fresh.

"I think that is part of the longevity, but he is also a freak of nature. They come along every generation. I sit in awe still of his ability to do it at this age." RING

STEVE MARCUS

Over 20 years after his first world title triumph in 1998, Manny Pacquiao is a champion once again..



WORLD BEAT

U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

A funny thing happened soon after Manny Pacquiao arrived in his hotel in upscale Park Lane in London in very late February 2009, his one visit to the U.K. to publicize his megafight with Ricky Hatton, scheduled for Sin City in early May. In spite of the fact he was scheduled to play darts against Hatton in Manchester, the Filipino's thoughts were, peculiarly, on The Queen of England. Pac Man wanted to know where Her Maj lived.

When your correspondent told some of his party – they were always numerous – that the queen lived in Buckingham Palace literally three to four minutes' walk away from the hotel, Pacquiao wanted to know if the monarch was in. He wanted tea with the queen. He was serious, too. I told them to go around the front of the building and see if the flag was flying, and if it was, Elizabeth was most likely there.

It was as peculiar a media tour as the constant coverage of the "Pac Man in the UK" story. There was fascination for the narrative of his life, and the fact that he was a champion in five weight divisions from flyweight to lightweight and widely regarded as the world's No. 1 pound-for-pound prize fighter after having beaten Oscar De La Hoya.

In the first-class carriage of a train heading 200 miles north to Manchester the next morning, Pacquiao's promoter Bob Arum and Richard Schaefer, then promoting Hatton, were to be found sitting opposite each other at a table. They were having breakfast. Rare, indeed. I can recall it as I shot it on video, while, in the next set of four seats, Pacquiao was perfecting his imitation of Mel Gibson in the movie Braveheart, much to his delight and those of his cohorts. The cultural reference was lost on most of us, but it was highly amusing nonetheless.

Pacquiao had cut a dapper figure in the public waiting room of Euston Station in central London. Arriving in Manchester, large groups of Filipinos had gathered to greet their national hero. But Hatton had his followers, too. "There's only one Ricky Hatton" boomed out in the now-familiar chanted monotony of a brass band. "Can't they get a new song?" asked Arum.

Four thousand Mancunians waiting at the Trafford Shopping Centre trumpeted Hatton's popularity as the fighters came face to face for the first time before their bout. Hatton looked a much bigger man. Pacquiao might have been far from home, but support for him was everywhere.

Then, on they went to the darts match. Hatton won at The New Inn, the public house he had grown up in and which his parents, Ray and Carole, had run (it's now a block of apartments), but the triumph of feathered arrows into a board was a far cry from what was to transpire in the ring at the MGM Grand Garden Arena a couple of months later. It was more competitive, anyway.

The pub scene was surreal, as Paul Speak, Hatton's manager, recalled. "It was a typical northern English pub with all the locals in there, and Manny came in wearing a suit and tie, and it was like an old movie when the stranger walks into town. The whole pub stopped and just went silent. Manny produced his own set of darts, and Ricky won the game. I can remember Freddie Roach saying at the time that it was the only thing that Ricky was going to beat Manny at."

By Sunday, the two boxers were headed to London for more media work. Pacquiao, followed in his every move by droves of Filipinos, went to church in the capital at Westminster Abbey, and on Monday they met for a press conference at the Imperial War Museum, a monument to the great battles in British history.

The Philippine ambassador attended the news conferences in both cities. "They have to be there," Arum explained. "Not because of Manny's career, but because of theirs." It was an indication, at the time, of his standing in his homeland, and he was already being tipped as the future president of his country.

There was plenty of press for Pacquiao from start to end. He revealed at the press conference that he had named his daughter Queen Elizabeth after the sovereign monarch, still intent on "having tea with the queen." It did not materialize on this media tour, but Pacquiao and his family later met with Prince Harry. It seems as if nothing was beyond the wishes of the great Filipino boxer.

"My daughter was baptized Queen Elizabeth as a tribute to your queen," Pac Man had explained. "She is very popular in the Philippines and I like her very much. I would like to meet Queen Elizabeth II one day to show my people how far I have come."

But Pacquiao did talk of Hatton, too, who was still a major star in the U.K. in spite of his defeat to Floyd Mayweather the previous December. "Losing to Mayweather may have made Hatton more dangerous, because it has made him a more experienced fighter. There is too much respect between us for there to be any trash talking," explained Pacquiao. "I like Ricky because he has been very friendly since I came to England. But when we are in the ring, we will become different people. We will turn into warriors."

Pacquiao said that he still felt the hunger from "eating once a day and sleeping on the street," adding that "every time I step into the ring, I am representing my people and give them inspiration by showing how Manny Pacquiao went from nothing to something." The media in the U.K. gobbled up the words of the fighter. Pacquiao certainly left a

Ricky Hatton triumphed in a game of darts, but it was Pacquiao who scored the bullseye in the ring.

huge impact on British sports fans as his rags-to-riches story was told.

"My dream was to come here to England, and it has come true. I also have the desire to take the [junior] welterweight title, and it's a big honor to be in another fight which the fans want to see. It will be a big fight and a crowd-pleaser."

Hatton's responses were to the point. He warned that Pacquiao was "up against a geezer who won't leave him alone, who won't give him a moment's peace." However, Pacquiao was to reverse those assertions spectacularly on the night they met in Las Vegas, dropping Hatton twice in the first round and finishing his foe in the second. He conquered the U.K. with a charm offensive. Then conquered Hatton by brutal assault.

JAPAN

BY YURIKO MIYATA

Back in April 2007, the door of Wild Card Boxing Club was surprisingly open to the public, even when Manny Pacquiao was working out there. I walked inside with my friend Sachi Takahata, a sociologist researching Filipino immigrants. We got to watch Pacquiao up close, frantically hitting the heavy bag in preparation for his fight against Jorge Solis, which followed his sensational third-round rubber-match stoppage of Erik Morales.

Surrounded by Pacquiao's supporters and veteran boxing writers, I was a little bit intimidated. The only subject I could think of to bring up to the Filipino hero was that I was at ringside when he fought Shin Terao at Korakuen Hall in Tokyo in 1998.

"Oh, yeah? I remember it," Pacquiao said, smiling.

It was a non-title bout scheduled for 10 rounds at a 114-pound catchweight, but it was the televised main event on May 18.

It was the first pro bout outside of the Philippines for the 19-year-old Pacquiao, who held the Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF) flyweight title and was rated No. 5 by the WBA. He held a respectable record of 22-1 (13 KOs) and had a vague reputation of being a hard hitter, if memory serves me right, but there were no big expectations for the little-known newcomer. Terao was No. 2 in the Japanese flyweight ratings with an ordinary record of 10-2-1 with only one KO, but his awkward offense and durability (backed by kickboxing experience) often troubled his opponents. Terao looked confident as he gave the OPBF champ a ceremonial bouquet in the ring prior to their bout. Filipino fighters that visited Japan were always tough and game, but they seldom won.

★ ★ ★ ★

A year had passed as a member of the editorial staff of Boxing Magazine, and in that short time I had observed about 120 events (two or three cards a week) at Tokyo's famous Korakuen Hall, which was walking distance from the office. One of the harsh realities of the boxing industry, I learned early on, was that most boxers from other Asian countries are brought to Japan for the sole purpose of giving the Japanese fighter a victory and sometimes a world ranking. The "sacrificial lambs" were sometimes Korean, Thai or Indonesian, but the large majority were Filipino.

Historically speaking, the Philippines, which developed its modern culture during the period of American rule, was the leading Asian country in boxing. Filipinos took to the art of boxing, often learned from U.S. servicemen. The first Asian boxing stars, from Pancho Villa to Ceferino Garcia to Flash Elorde, were Filipinos. Before and after World War II, Japanese boxers looked up to the Filipino warriors. But things change with time.

Of course, we saw some "Japanese-killers" in the 1980s and 1990s, including former WBC 108-pound titleholder Roland Pascua, two-division titleholder Luisito Espinosa, junior featherweight contender Reynante Jamili and bantamweight gatekeeper Jess Maca. There have also been some Japanese-managed Filipino talents who were given local aliases (Japanese surnames), such as Ala Villamor Kimura (Ala Villamor), Rubillar Ibaraki (Ernesto Rubillar), Mangoro Ishimaru (Raffy Montalban), Suzuki Cabato (Nolito Cabato) and Gamboa Koizumi (Joma Gamboa).

However, in terms of visiting boxers from the Philippines, only nine out of 84 in 116 bouts scored a victory in Japan in 1997. And in 1998, only four out of 81 visiting Filipinos had their hand raised while visiting Japan. Pacquiao was one of them.

Korakuen Hall was far from a full house that night. Even press row had some vacancies. I spoke with my colleagues about how to pronounce his unfamiliar last name correctly, but once Pacquiao climbed between the ropes, I was struck by his fearless look and couldn't help noticing the big, supple calves of the fighter.

In less than a minute after the opening bell, Pacquiao's straight left reached the seemingly out-of-range chin of Terao. The skinny southpaw immediately sparked into finishing mode, unlike the typical skilled Filipino boxer. A merciless storm of punches floored Terao three times to violently halt the bout one second before the end of the first round.

The winner fired off a little fist pump with no smile. He received a silver trophy and a small plaque award for his KO performance and then quietly left the ring, still with no smile. I was astonished by the indescribable energy and ambition that he showed in less than 10 minutes total inside the historic Japanese fight venue.

Seven months later, Pacquiao pulled off a major upset by winning the WBC flyweight title with a

KYODO NEWS

knockout of skilled Thai veteran Chatchai Sasakul, who was the respected rival of Japan-based Russian star Yuri Arbachakov. Pacquiao lost that title on the scales and suffered a stoppage due to the weight drain and was all but forgotten until he jumped into the American boxing scene as a late replacement to face IBF junior featherweight titleholder Lehlo Ledwaba in June 2001. No need to mention his further prosperity. For more than 20 years, I have enjoyed and admired the living legend who keeps going beyond our imagination. I always acknowledge how I was lucky to witness Pacquiao when he was 19 years young in Japan. I am sure that 1,500 in attendance at Korakuen Hall that night share this feeling.

Bantamweight champion Naoya Inoue dreams of having the same level of public appeal and fan appreciation as Pacquiao.

By the way, in case you're wondering what happened to Terao, the more world-famous Pacquiao became, the more

attention Terao received in Japan. Although he retired from boxing without any major titles (not even a national belt), he was promoted well in kickboxing and pro wrestling. They valued him as "the only Japanese who fought Pacquiao." He was even featured in some popular TV programs. If Pacquiao ever runs for president of the Philippines, Terao will be rooting for him.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

Pacquiao replacing Enrique Sanchez turned out to be the stuff of nightmares for IBF 122-pound titleholder Lehlo Ledwaba.

When Lehlohonolo Ledwaba defended his IBF junior featherweight title for the sixth time at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas in 2001, it was supposed to be a U.S. showcase for the South African. Instead, the fight will be remembered as a launchpad for his opponent, Manny Pacquiao.

Ledwaba had captured the IBF belt by outpointing former WBA bantamweight titleholder and Junior Jones-conqueror John Michael Johnson. He was used to fighting on

the road, and all but one of his title defenses came by stoppage.

Pacquiao was a former WBC titleholder, but that was at flyweight. On top of that, he came in as a two-week replacement. Little was known about the Filipino challenger and, in South Africa at least, it was thought that Ledwaba had little to worry about.

Ledwaba narrates the run-up to the fight: "I was preparing for (Enrique) Sanchez. Then we got the call that he was injured, and there was a replacement. We were already in America, and as a boxer, you don't have a salary. I needed to fight. I had (financial) commitments. Thinking about it now, maybe I should have pulled out. I knew nothing about Pacquiao. We asked for some tape and only got it on the day of the weigh-in. We saw a strong, aggressive guy. But other than that, he did not look like anything special, so I thought I would handle him."

Things took an ominous turn for the South African as early as the first round. After a feeling-out process, Pacquiao, the TV commentators still struggling to pronounce his surname, started teeing off on Ledwaba with power shots to the head and body, bloodying his nose.

It got worse in the second when what appeared to be a glancing short left sent Ledwaba to the canvas. "There was a headbutt before that," claims Ledwaba. "After that, we could not stop my nose bleeding and I wasn't the same. But I was defending my title and I wanted to keep it, so I tried as hard as I could." The knockdown seemed to wake him up. He planted his feet and started fighting back, snapping back the head of Pacquiao with some hard jabs. Pacquiao simply brushed off anything Ledwaba threw and retaliated with thudding southpaw lefts to the head and body.

The power difference was obvious as Pacquiao landed a big right hook at the start of the third. Ledwaba landed a solid left hook of his own in the fourth, but Pacquiao just kept coming, outlanding the champion while administering a gradual beating.

The end came in the sixth round when a straight left from Pacquiao put Ledwaba on the seat of his pants. Ledwaba got up, but seconds later another left made his legs slide apart and he went down again, his hands still up. Referee Joe Cortez waved the fight over at the 0:59 mark and Manny Pacquiao had burst onto the world scene!

Did Ledwaba think that Pacquiao would go on to become a huge star? "It is hard to tell these things at the time, but I think when you fight great fighters like he did and you keep winning, your confidence grows, and you get better and better." He remains skeptical of Pacquiao's meteoric rise through weight divisions, though. "Going from flyweight to junior featherweight, that is one thing. But then going up (in weight) as far as he did, it seems impossible to me."

Pacquiao would go on to score many victories over higher-profile opponents, but consider this: In his next fight, Ledwaba produced one more great victory, outpointing countryman Vuyani Bungu, who had reigned for five years as a 122-pound titleholder, over 12 rounds. How long would Ledwaba have reigned had he not had the misfortune of bumping into boxing's best-kept secret at the time? Would other South African junior featherweight world titleholders like Bungu and Welcome Ncita have done any better against the future senator?

Who knows? The fact remains that it was one of those victories that looked even better over time, and Ledwaba can console himself that he lost his belt to a truly great fighter.

Ledwaba, who today manages and trains fighters, wishes his old rival well but also throws in a word of caution: "Manny really deserves a good send-off now. He should go out while he is on top and not stay around. Today everyone wants to fight him to build their reputations. Boxing is not like other sports. If you are not careful, you won't be the same after you retire."

DI NARDO

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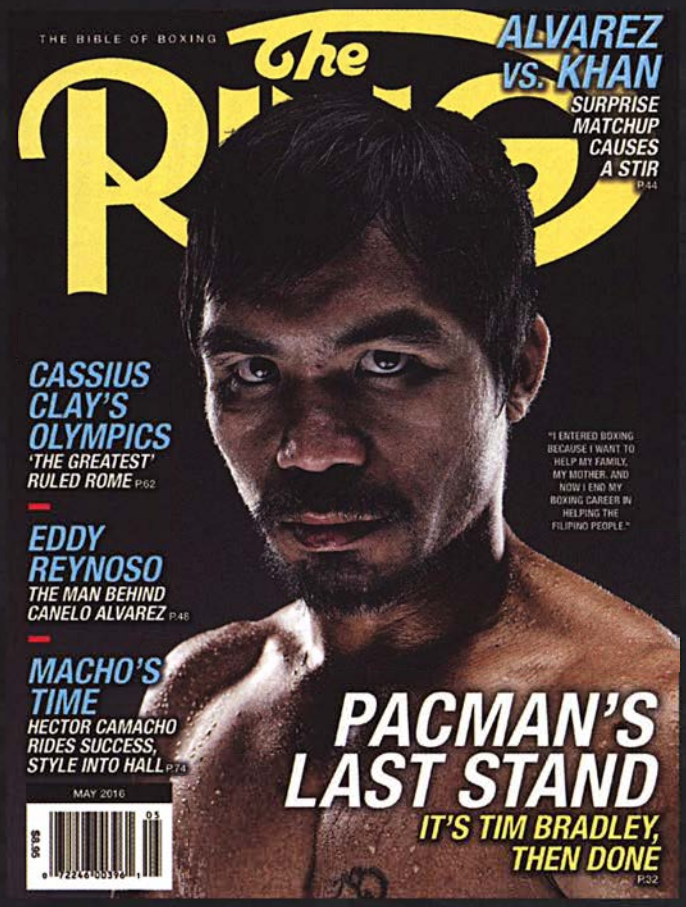

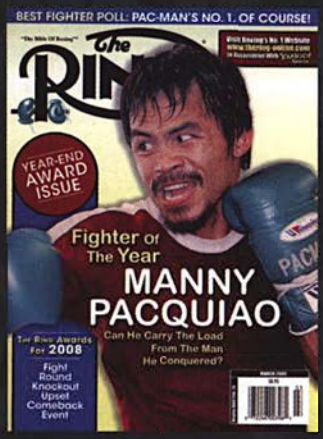

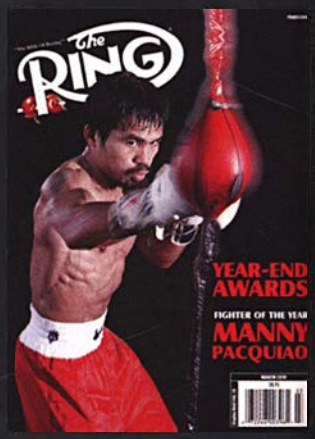

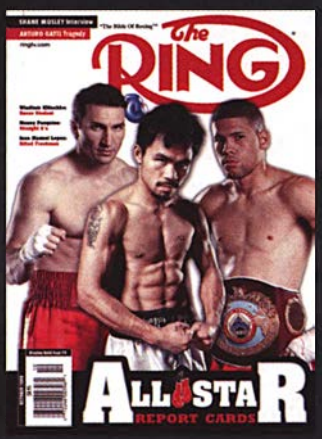

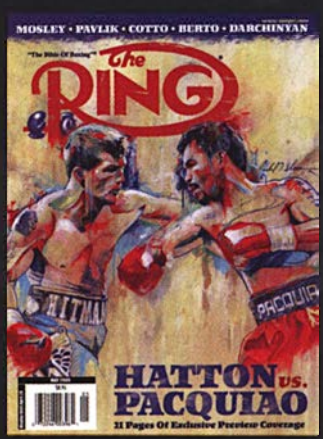

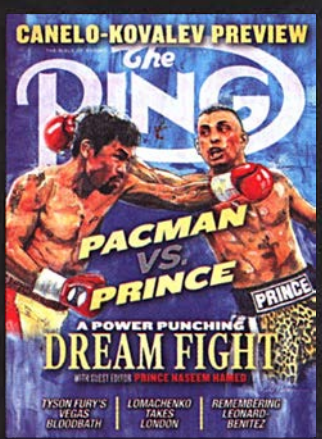

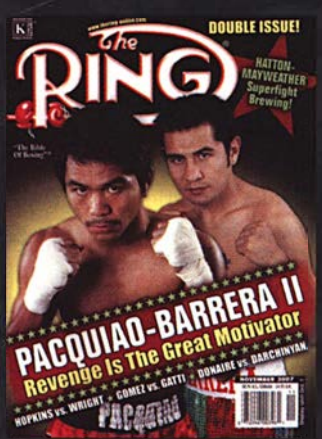

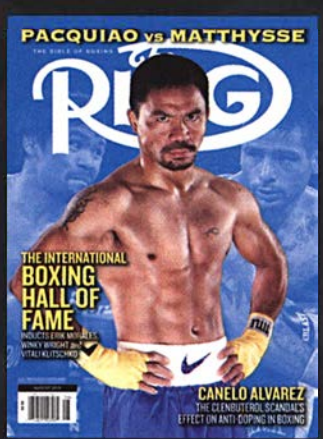

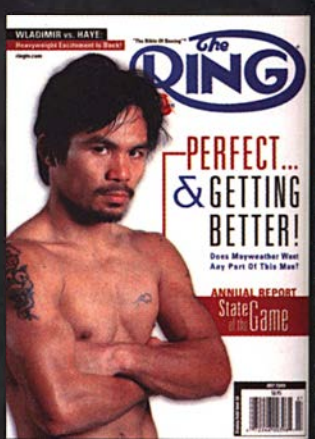

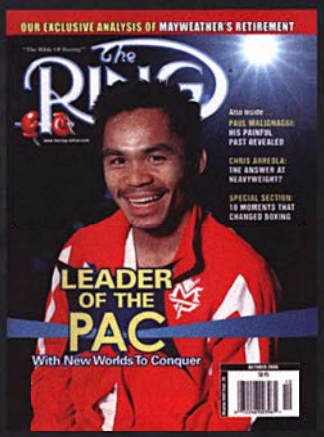

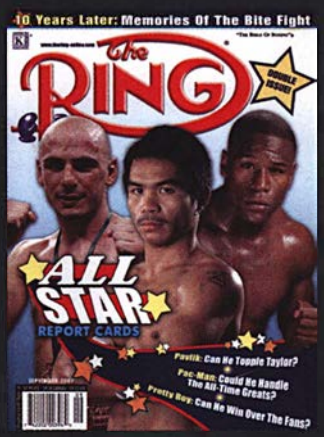

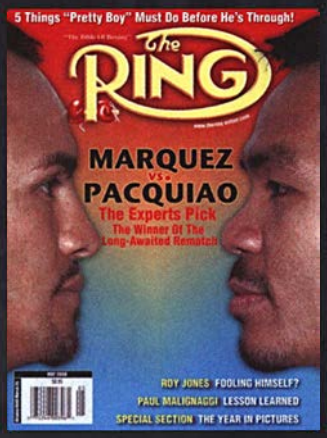

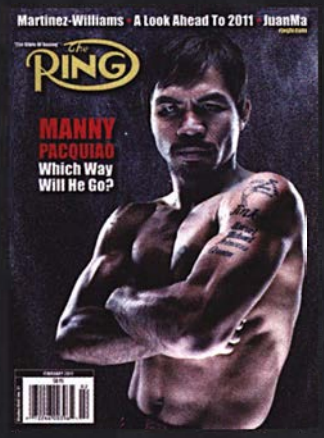

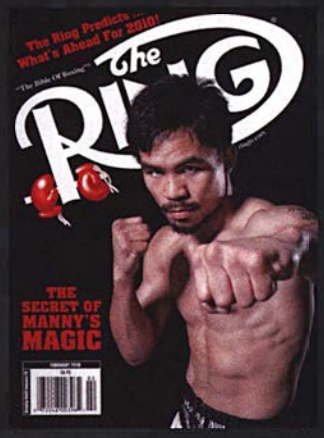

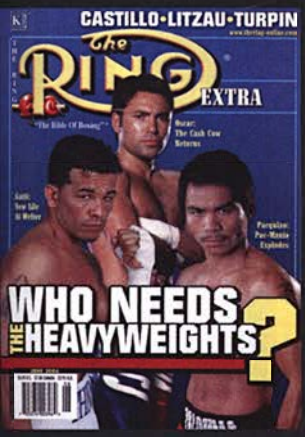

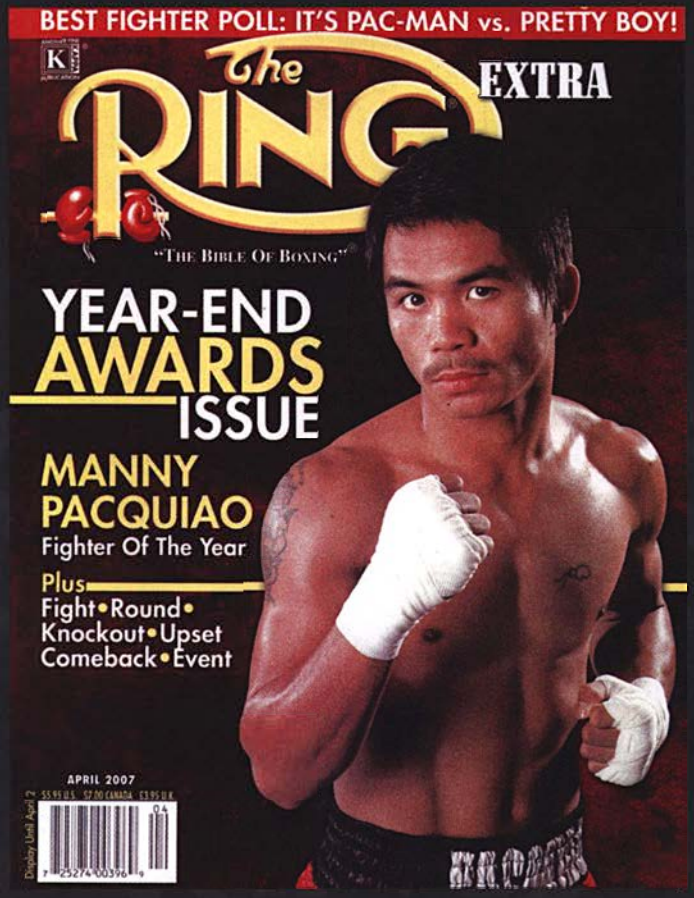

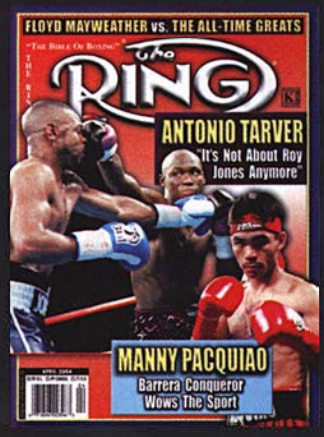

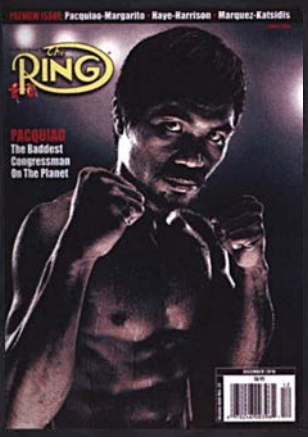

15 YEARS OF STARDOM

Manny Pacquiao's historic march through the featherweight, lightweight and welterweight divisions and his meteoric climb through the pound-for-pound rankings was chronicled on the covers of The Ring Magazine during the 2000s and 2010s.

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